

# Foreword

So many of us look forward to becoming a parent. The rewards touch our hearts to its very depth; the love is so great. There is none like it. But the dichotomy of this relationship is the depth of the hurt it also brings: Hurting because your child is hurting; hurting because your child is not heading in the right direction in life. This is something else again, when you are a Christian and, though you've taught your child the things of God, he/she is not walking in obedience to you or to God.

Lorna and I had so many heart-to-heart talks over the years as we walked along the Erie Canal in Rochester. We spilled our hearts out with love and concern for our children and ended with prayer for them. During those times, as Lorna shared her struggles with Candi, I listened and pondered. Many times my response was just, "Oh dear." I could understand Lorna's frustrations, but I must admit, there were times when I felt she was too tough on Candi. (In my interactions with Candi, she was just such a sweet, young woman.) Though I disagreed with Lorna a number of times and she knew it, it never put a damper on our friendship. Truly a blessing from God!

As the years have gone on, Lorna has remained steadfast in the Lord and in her expectations of Candi. There were many tough times. Now, as Lorna and I continue to walk and chat, I hear her express gratitude to God for the fine young woman Candi has become. Candi and her mom have a truly loving relationship and Christ is a very important part of it. Candi knows where her mother stands—on Jesus, her Rock!

Jean Hink

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## Introduction

I am writing this little book because, for the first year after my husband left, I kept a journal which has been significant in ultimately shaping who my daughter, Candi, is today. I gave it to her as a little memoir the day she left home to start college in 1998. Candi has since shared the journal with many friends. I did not want to lose it, so I decided to write a little book and share it instead. In so doing, Candi and I will always have my original journal as a testimony of God's faithfulness during a very difficult period in our lives.

I am very much against divorce. Allow me to reiterate. In no way do I want to be promoting single parenting. It is NOT God's ideal. He made Adam and Eve, the first parents, a male and a female. Therefore, I believe that is the model He desires for us, but as you will see later, I really had no other choice.

In 1996 when my husband and I were divorced, I encountered a variety of changes, very different from anything I could ever have anticipated. The experiences were quite significant and through them I have learned a lot. Most of these occurrences have played themselves out through Candi, causing her to become most unapproachable, disagreeable, and incorrigible. This journal is a bird's-eye view of that very difficult period in my daughter's and my life.

Before I set the tone for telling exactly how this journal came about, I want to emphasize that our walk with Christ is a personal one. He speaks to all of us differently and does not necessarily require the same things from each of us. What worked for me may not necessarily be applicable for someone else, but one thing is absolutely sure, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He will never abandon us as orphans.

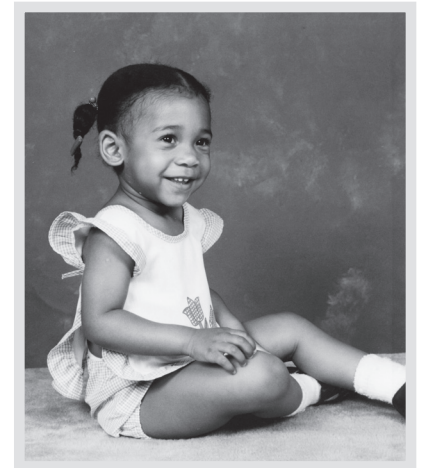
God will never leave us nor forsake us and in the time of our greatest need, He does His greatest work. He is faithful, patient, loving, forgiving, and longsuffering. Now, those are not all of His attributes, but they are certainly the ones that were most powerful and prevalent in my greatest hour of need.

### Editor's note:

Lorna is a cheerful, friendly person. I love being around her because my spirits are always lifted. I also love her endearing accent and manner of speaking. Growing up in Jamaica, she was given basically a British education. As you read this book, please enjoy the bit of British flavor in the way Lorna crafts some of her sentences.

Chapter One

WHERE'S  
MY SWEET  
DAUGHTER?



Candi age 18 months

My fifteen-year-old daughter was a very sweet girl. She and I had a delightful, close relationship. Let me try and draw you a picture of what she was like. We both went to Church and did what most God-fearing committed Christians did. I had a personal relationship with Christ and, although Candi had not openly declared her faith through baptism, I believe that she did accept Christ as her Savior. You could always catch her living according to the tenets of the Christian faith.

She had a pet rabbit, Benji, that she always cared for well. She frequently took him out of his cage to play with him, often pulling a string around that he would chase after. Whenever she took him out, she would set up his poopy corner because he was paper trained. Her bedroom was never immaculate, unless she was planning to have friends over, but it was also never filthy. NEVER, did she leave her clothes on the floor. However, she rarely made her bed. She got \$1 per day for each day that she made it. I think the most she ever earned was \$15, usually when she knew that something was coming up like going skating or miniature golfing where she had to pay. She practiced her piano regularly, even choosing songs to practice ahead of time, so that whenever she was asked to play during the offertory at church, she would be prepared.

Her father never went to church, but one day he said he would join us. It was 1992. He and I had some problems in our relationship, and he thought that if the family worshipped together, it would improve our life. Candi, then age eleven, was elated and quite ecstatic. Since we had both been praying for him, it seemed reasonable to believe that the Lord was answering our prayers.

My husband came to church for a few Sundays and many congregants, as Candi and I did, thought he had really changed. But then one day he announced that the services were boring, and he was going to visit other churches. When he found the right one, we could all change and worship as a family. I agreed. Well, a few weeks later, he came back and said that he had found the ideal one: Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. At that time, I didn't really know much about this group, except that they knocked on your door on Saturday mornings and left you a *Watchtower*. However, the Ruach HaKodesh (Hebrew for "Holy Spirit") is alive and well, and I immediately got a check in my spirit. I did some research and found out that Jehovah's Witnesses is a cult. I informed my husband that I wouldn't go to their assembly. He reminded me that both Candi and I were supposed to accompany him because that was the agreement. I refused, but Candi decided to go with him. I really didn't want her to, but I believe that the Ruakh HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) prevented me from causing a scene. Well, lo and

behold, Candi came back home and informed me that those people weren't Christians. I rest my case. Being only eleven years old, how could she know they weren't Christians? I am sure that this revelation came from our Heavenly Father. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, a truth revealed.

Well, my husband set to work to convert both Candi and me. In case you, the reader, have not yet figured it out, Satan and the Lord cannot coexist peacefully under the same roof, but that is what my husband was attempting. It didn't work. Suffice it to say, we were as close to Armageddon as I ever want to get.

During this time, Candi was most attentive and loving to me. Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate anything except wedding anniversaries. Candi saved her money to buy me flowers and gifts for Mother's Days and my birthdays. This really touched me.

I love Candi very much and as my only child, I protected and shielded her from a lot of things. But I was unable to protect her from what happened next. Since my husband was not getting anywhere in trying to encourage, convince, persuade, cajole, bribe me—whatever means he could conjure up—to get me to come his way, he turned his attention to our daughter. He figured that if he tried to make her life as miserable as possible, he would win us both over because I would do anything for Candi's happiness. Well, it didn't work, but it made our living together up to 1996 pure torture.

The worst incident came one quiet Saturday night. My husband and Candi were having a rare moment of relaxing father-daughter time. I was upstairs, when suddenly the stillness was shattered by Candi's piercing scream. I jumped up, but before I could even make it to the stairs, she rushed up the steps in record time and collapsed in my arms, sobbing uncontrollably. It was impossible to make any sense of what she was trying to say. I finally got her calm enough for her to explain.

Apparently, her dad took their time together to inform her that he did not want her to call him Dad anymore. His premise was that as an upstanding member of Kingdom Hall, on whom deaconship was going to be conferred, he represented morality and I represented immorality. Since she had chosen immorality over morality, she could no longer call him Dad. I prayed with Candi and then we read Psalms 27 together. When she became calmer and more relaxed, she went to her room to get ready for bed.

I took a deep breath and calmly walked downstairs, ignoring the pounding in my breast, which I believe was more from anger than any other emotion. When I got to the den, I turned the television off and faced my husband. I asked him to explain to me who Candi's dad was, because if he weren't, then I definitely needed to find the person that

*I explain about the piano just sitting there gathering dust. I would hope for your sake that you will start playing soon. After all, you have less than two years and before you know it, time will have flown by.*

**What would you do to encourage the cooperation of my 15-year-old son who deliberately makes a nuisance of himself? He throws his clothes around, refuses to help out around the house and pesters his little brother perpetually.**

I would seek to find a way to link his behavior to something important to him, such as privileges or even money. If he receives an allowance, for example, this money could provide an excellent tool with which you can generate a little motivation.

Suppose he is given \$4 a week. That maximum can be taxed regularly for violation of predetermined rules. For example, each article of clothing left on the floor might cost him a dime. A deliberate provocation of his brother would subtract a quarter from his total. Each Saturday, he would receive the money remaining from the taxation of the last week. This system conforms to the principle behind all adolescent discipline: Give the individual a reason for obeying other than the simple fact that he was told to do so.

*I know it seems severe to you to think: No car because of some dumb chores or stupid piano, but read the article at the left from Dr. Dobson. His magazine arrived today and in my mind—a God-send. It certainly drives home all the things I have been trying to explain to you. Well, all I can do is continue to guide you in God's truth.*

*Love,  
Mom*

*Friday, Oct. 25, 1996*

*Dear Candi,*

*Last night I was so tired, I couldn't make an entry. I guess I was perturbed about my account missing over \$400. Well, today I realize where it is and I feel better. My Father had been watching over me all that time.*

*Today, at the hairdresser's, I was very pleased that as worldly as our hairdressers, Trish and Sonia, are, they realized the wisdom of your obeying me. You tried so hard to show them how hard, mean and unfair I am, but I have to believe that deep down, you know I am right. They have not been our hairdressers as long as you have been my daughter, yet they seem to be able to acknowledge good parenting when they see it.*

*Tomorrow is the last day of cross country and it's not so much that I don't want you to enjoy a party with your friends, but have you taken a look at your room? That dresser is so filthy. Of course, we can't even mention the carpet. But then again, you didn't ask for a white carpet in your room.*

*However, you did ask for a piano and you did ask for Benji. They are still not being taken care of. Well, I do know that I sound like a broken record. This is the reason why I am using this journal as a sounding board.*

*Love,  
Mom*

I am pretty sure, that you, the reader, might think I am making this all up. I wish I were. Suffice it to say, the Spirit of the Lord was with me. I didn't yell, and I didn't slap her. In the quietest voice I could muster, I simply said, "From this day on, you will make your own lunch."

*Wednesday, January 29, 1997*

*Dear Candi,*

*Tonight was quite a little scene and you truthfully almost lost the opportunity to do driving lessons. Well, at least from now on you will be peeling your own oranges since you expect me to do it completely according to your standard, at all times.*

*Sometimes I think you forget that you are sixteen. Anyway, a simple little grounding is in order for this weekend and you will just have to make your own sandwich on Friday.*

*It is such a shame that ever so often you revert to your little attitude. Well, try not to lose out on all your little benefits.*

*Love,*

*Mom*

I don't remember much about what followed. I know that I didn't make her lunch for a while. Candi tells me now that I did go back to making her lunches again. So I am assuming she must have apologized or begged me to continue and I did. I am pretty sure it wasn't right away, though.

I want this little journal to be a work of reflection, so now I am reflecting. I am sure now that it wasn't the pith that Candi was angry about. I am guessing that her outburst over the orange was triggered by something else. Maybe it was a smoke screen which masked the real problems she was having in school—problems that I didn't learn about until later.

I can't change anything now, but sometimes I wonder how I should have dealt with those times. However, in all my pondering, I still don't have a complete answer.

Candi was not the type of child to open up and speak. She kept a lot of her feelings bottled up inside and would just explode at the slightest provocation. Even just reminding her to feed her rabbit or mentioning any other mundane thing could initiate a negative reaction.

Sometimes, as I look back, I think it was probably just as well that I didn't react to her outbursts. I think she needed time to work through the issues for herself. I know that if I had tried to reason with her, it would have only been an open door for her screaming and blaming which would have done nothing to soothe her or calm my anger.

Today Candi reminds me that I did often give her the silent treatment. It wasn't deliberate on my part, but it seemed like the only way to have a semblance of peace in my home. I cringe now at how this must have affected her. She was hurting so much and then to have me ignore her must truly have been a lot for her to bear. For that I am truly sorry. I never said I was a perfect mother. Thank the Lord for His forgiveness and for Candi's today.

As I said, I spoke very little directly to Candi when problems occurred. However, I have informed her, now that she is grown, that I did speak. I spoke through the journal which I handed to her when she left for college. Although my responses were not always immediate, she did learn and has finally come to understand how things were affecting me. She also came to the realization that I did understand her hurt and her pain.

#### Trouble at School

Approximately a week after the incident with the lunch scene, I found out that Candi was having some problems at school with a girl by the name of Melissa. This girl belonged to the popular "in" crowd. For reasons unknown, she started picking on Candi. Apparently, as Candi was running for track practice, Melissa was sitting with her group of buddies on the sidelines, and as Candi jogged by, she stretched out her foot

and kicked her. When I learned about this incident, I was incensed. Candi, however, did not want me to go to school and do anything about it. She was right. It's not good for kids to have their parents fight all their battles for them. I learned from Candi that this was a one-time event. Thank God for that.

*Thursday, February 6, 1997 9:01 P.M.*

*Dear Candi,*

*I think you misunderstood what I was telling you tonight. This girl Melissa (I think that's her name) had no right to hit, punch, or kick you. Sometimes I think you are just too soft. As a teacher I have observed that the so-called big, bad bullies pick on a person they perceive they can manage and manipulate. I am so angry inside that I almost feel like I should go and retaliate on your behalf.*

*Of course, I know I have to leave it to the Lord. I wish you had decided to go to the Christian School. I know you would miss your friends, but at least you wouldn't have to be preoccupied with mean, selfish and uncouth beings like Melissa and her cohorts. I am surprised that Shannon is a friend of hers. I guess kids do change a lot between elementary and high school.*

*I hate to say this, but I bet she never would have picked on one of those tough, inner city girls. Then again, we know that she is a coward.*

*I love you, Honey.*

*Love,  
Mom*

### Basketball Boy

It is necessary to also note here that the incident with Melissa came shortly after another school-related incident. A certain basketball player took a liking to Candi. I didn't get any indication from her that she had any feelings toward this young man. We had talked about him before. She had told me that he was a rather promiscuous person and she had no interest in him. Thank God, Candi was not into sex, drugs, or alcohol. However, two cousins liked this basketball player and imagined Candi to be a threat to them.

The two young ladies, who were a part of the Urban Suburban program, decided to bully Candi. Now, this is how misguided society can be. Candi had no relationship with this basketball player except as a peer, yet these two girls, instead of focusing on why they were being spurned by this student, decided to bully the person they perceived to be the object of his attention.

They started threatening Candi. They even pulled her hair one time! Another time they followed her into the girls' bathroom with the intention to beat her up. Candi was aware of their intention and stayed in the stall for a long time, missing her class, because she was afraid to come out. Thank the Lord for His mercy, they left without hurting her.

It had only been a few months earlier that, at a nearby inner city middle school, a female student was stabbed by another female student over a boy! She died. And these girls threatening Candi were from the inner city! Candi must have been terrified every day as she approached school, knowing she would have to face those girls.

Just as an aside, if you do not understand the Urban Suburban program, this is what it's all about. Students who attend the inner city schools can apply for acceptance in certain suburban school districts. Upon acceptance, they are bused to that particular district for their instruction.

When I heard about what was happening to Candi, I was furious. I certainly did not want Candi to ever be placed in a dangerous situation! I knew that Candi, though she could be defiant towards me, did not know how to defend herself against this kind of thing. She was not a fighter—not vicious at all. It worried me how much of a pushover she was when it came to her peers.

I sent a letter to the school officials about it, but nothing changed. Therefore, I felt it necessary to meet with school personnel to ensure that proper precautions were taken

to safe-guard my child whenever she was on school premises. I spoke vehemently to the vice principal that I paid taxes in this town so that my child could be in a stress-free environment to study without having to worry about her life being threatened! I said that something had better be done about it before she gets hurt! Soon after that, these students were called to the office and were reprimanded. They never bothered Candi again. Of course, a few weeks later, those same two students had a big fight in the hallway and, based on their record, were suspended from the program. Was God being a Father or what?

Well, with those and other issues impacting Candi's life, I wanted her to change schools and attend a Christian High School, but she wouldn't hear of it and I understood her reasoning. Here she was, almost a senior. She had gone to school with the same set of students since first grade. To start in an environment where she would be the new kid on the block was certainly not appealing to her. I am sure it would not have appealed to most other people either.

Those were not the only two incidents. A later school-related problem, dated June 4th, 1997, needs no further explanation or clarification. You can judge for yourself.

Now, let's go back to Candi's favorite subject, the car. Remember, she still hadn't gotten her license as yet, but she was certainly paving the way for this car that she was bound and determined to have. Also remember that she was unaware that I had been trying to figure out how to get one for her. From her point of view, it looked like I was determined to refuse her wish. The next journal entry demonstrates the lengths to which she would go, to ensure that she would get a car when the time came.



Here I am in my element as a teacher.  
This was taken during that stressful time.  
You can sort of read the strain on my face.



Chapter Six

ALMOST TO  
THE BREAKING  
POINT



Candi age 7 and Lorna