

December 3, 2008

Dear Darrell Scott,

I know that you have heard this letter a million times, figuratively, but I really wanted to express to you how your book, Rachel Smiles, has touched my heart. Darrell, Rachel is my role model, or at least one of the closest people I have to one. I want to be the kind of person she was and stand out in the crowd, in an optimistic way. I want to impact millions of lives. I want God to set his helping hands on my shoulders. Am I being selfish?

I can barely comprehend the sacrifices Rachel made for her friends, family, and millions of strangers. I couldn't believe her story at first. I didn't even know about the Columbine Massacre until I read your book. I was so surprised when I read about the whole devastating, and yet also uplifting, story. I loved reading about the tears and smiles of Rachel's life. She is evidently what God wants his children to resemble. Her story has encouraged millions of people (me included) to lend a helping hand and start a chain reaction of friendliness. Your book and your daughter's story have made me realize that God does send miracles to Earth. I have learned that God always forgives, but never forgets. And with every devastating end, there is always a new, joyful beginning.

Your book has opened my mind to many fresh ideas. Here is one: I know that it's easy to go about life simply caring about yourself, going day by day, thinking me, me, me. You will make others unhappy and they will make more people unhappy; it will never stop!! Life as we know it will end as an appalling chain reaction. But if you go about life with compassion: caring, helping, and thinking of others, you will surely be utterly, infinitely, and genuinely happy. The smiles, hugs, and joyous tears will make your hard work all worthwhile. Everyone will be utterly, infinitely, and genuinely happy. Like Rachel says, it will be a splendid chain reaction. Good chain reaction or bad chain reaction? Every person has a choice. Any one individual has the power to alter the chain reaction drastically. With the help of Rachel's story, I think the good chain reaction will overpower the bad.

Darrell, you know how terrible teenagers can be at using compassion. I, myself, am a teenager and when I think about it, I'm revolted by the way we treat each other. What's heartbreaking is that most of the kids that are so dreadful have a reason for being that way. Now that I realize it, I'm trying my hardest to launch a chain reaction. It can get exceedingly hard sometimes, but with God and Rachel's story backing me up in the swarming hallways, I will start a chain reaction. The school atmosphere is the easiest place to start a chain reaction. So many chances to help someone out that needs it.

Your book made me realize that the Columbine Massacre could have happened to any school. Even mine. I could have been one of thirteen innocent people that were shot and killed by two troubled students. Rachel's story has made me wonder if I would truly be happy with the choices I have made if my life were to end in the near future. Would God be

content with my life and my choices? I now think more about the saying I'm sure we've all heard, 'What would Jesus do?'

Thank you so much for sharing Rachel's story with all humanity. Please, Darrell, keep preaching Rachel's story to others.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Risser