

Rachel's Tears: The Spiritual Journey of Columbine Martyr Rachel Scott Study Guide

**Rachel's Tears: The Spiritual Journey of Columbine
Martyr Rachel Scott by Beth Nimmo**

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Contents

Rachel's Tears: The Spiritual Journey of Columbine Martyr Rachel Scott Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Introduction - Chapter 3.....	4
Chapters 4-6.....	9
Chapters 7-9.....	12
Chapters 10-11.....	15
Characters.....	17
Objects/Places.....	20
Themes.....	22
Style.....	24
Quotes.....	26
Topics for Discussion.....	27

Plot Summary

"Rachel's Tears: The Spiritual Journey of Columbine Martyr Rachel Scott" by Beth Nimmo and Darrell Scott with Steve Rabey is a story written by parents of a girl who was killed in the shootings at Columbine High School in 1999. After her death, they found journals and other writings that showed them that their daughter had an intimate relationship with God. They share her writing and their experiences in this book to help others who struggle with faith.

Everyone has a unique way of worshiping, and Rachel communicated with God through her writing. After her parents looked at what she had written, they got a glimpse into her relationship with God. They realized that she knew that she was going to die young.

April 20, 1999 began as a regular day. By the end of the day however, over two dozen students were injured and 12 students and a teacher were found dead. As the world was notified of horrifying events that were occurring in the Columbine high school, Rachel's parents joined other families frantically trying to get hold of the children. Their son, Craig, survived, but Rachel was shot and killed as she ate lunch outside with a friend. After her funeral, the family members began to find things that Rachel had written. They realized that the girl was brutally honest with God in her writing. She expressed doubts about faith, but she never doubted God's sovereignty.

Although people tried to make Rachel and some of the others out as saints, she was just as normal as everyone else. She had weaknesses, but instead of being crushed by the weaknesses, she took them to God and used them as learning experiences.

Millions of viewers around the world watched Rachel's funeral, learning about her life and love of God. The public wrestled with the fact that evil could come to such a place, but those boys were not alone. In private, anonymous Internet chat rooms, many people identified with the feelings of anger and alienation that led the boys to their violent demonstration. Rachel knew about alienation and hurt, but she was able to share her feelings with God through her journals. Her method of fighting back against the evil in the world was using love and kindness.

While she was living, Rachel had a passion for drama. She connected with other students during a school play and missed some meetings at Breakthrough, a youth cell group she attended for spiritual renewal. The group believed strongly in prayer and meant a lot to her, according to her journals. After her death, Rachel's brother went to the meetings to heal. He determined to continue reaching out to others where his sister left off.

Rachel's parents wanted to reach out to others as well. Feeling that the tragic events occurred from a youthful generation that lacked moral and spiritual foundations, they took a message of kindness to the road. They traveled around the country, encouraging youth to begin a chain reaction of kindness.



Introduction - Chapter 3

Introduction - Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

"Rachel's Tears: The Spiritual Journey of Columbine Martyr Rachel Scott" by Beth Nimmo and Darrell Scott with Steve Rabey is a story written by parents of a girl who was killed in the shootings at Columbine high school in 1999. After her death, they found journals and other writing that showed them that their daughter had an intimate relationship with God. They share the writing in this book to help others who struggle with faith.

While the authors are thankful that people are reading this book, they want to make it clear that it's a book that they never wanted to write. The horrible tragedy at Columbine completely upended the lives of this family as well as the families of the 13 killed and the others who were wounded. The death of their daughter led to many experiences with the national media. They hope the message they bring to others about their daughter's death helps others.

Traveling around and speaking about Rachel is very painful. They wish they could bring her back, but they can't. They believe God has a purpose for everything that happened. After Rachel died, they read through her journals and papers and realized that Rachel knew she was going to die young.

While everyone has a unique way of worshipping God, Rachel mostly communicated with God through her writing journals. She began in 1997 when she received a journal for Christmas. The first entry was a prayer. Rachel thanked God for the birth of His Son and wrote about her plans for the journal.

The authors write that they are sharing parts of Rachel's journal in this book so her beliefs can help others. They make it clear that Rachel was not a saint and she had struggles that most readers can relate to.

While she was living, Rachel loved God and wanted to share this faith with others. She didn't want to be obnoxious about it, though. She shared her faith by living it out as much as possible and praying for others.

Through the events of the past year, the authors learned more about God's sovereignty as they tried to wrestle with the idea that God allows bad things to happen in the world. They found that the experiences helped them develop a stronger faith as they trusted God more. They knew their daughter prayed that she could make an impact on the world, and her death led to a huge ministry stemmed by her faith.

The authors feel that God prepared Rachel for her death. They highlight the fact that within hours of her death, she drew a prophetic image in her journal. It showed her eyes with 13 tears watering a rose. That day she had told her friend that she felt as if there was something strange about the day.



Losing a loved one is always very difficult. The parents were angry and sad. They really struggled with the concept of forgiveness as well. Because of their religion and faith in God, they knew their only option was to forgive. Citing Matthew 5:43-44 from the Holy Bible, the authors point out that forgiveness is for both the offender and the one who is offended. It's a freeing process. The act of forgiveness is also what reaches out to others. It can only be done with God's grace.

Now that the authors have defined the event, their response and what they hope this book will do to help others, they talk more about Rachel herself. They write that if Rachel were alive, she would find the fact that her journals were being used as a Christian role model laughable. Still, she would be happy that something she did would be helping others.

The events of April 20, 1999, resulted in worldwide news coverage for over a month. Images of frightened students running away from a school that was surrounded by dozens of armed police testified to the horrifying events of the day. Two troubled teens attacked their fellow students at Columbine High School eight miles southwest of Denver, Colorado. They injured more than two dozen students and killed 12 other students and a teacher.

It could have been worse. The two boys had planted almost 100 explosive devices in and around their school, but most of the bombs never went off. A year later, Columbine was considered a symbol of the violence that lies under the tranquil exterior of American life. In the following pages of this book, Darrell and Beth recount the emotional roller coaster they experienced during the day. They write about discovering Rachel's journals and what they learned about her. In her own words in a journal, Rachel had written about her school corridors as "halls of tragedy."

The morning of Tuesday, April 20, 1999, was a typical morning. Beth went through the standard morning schedule not having a glimmer that the day would end up in heartbreak as her 17-year-old daughter, Rachel Joy Scott, would be "cruelly martyred for her faith in Jesus Christ and go to heaven."

Rachel always had a hard time getting up on Tuesdays since her Mondays were packed with work and her youth cell group. Beth was worried her daughter was getting too tired. Rachel came into the bathroom to use Beth's makeup. Beth remembers noting what her daughter was wearing, thinking how pretty her daughter was and how unaware of it she was.

Rachel left for school with her brother Craig while Beth dropped Mike off at his school and went to work. After 11 in the morning, Bethanee called her at work to tell her that something happened at Columbine. She said she was going there to get Rachel and Craig and told her mother to turn on the news. When Beth did this, she was horrified at what she saw. She called her husband, Larry then told her boss she would have to leave work early.



As she waited for her husband, Craig called her. She was so relieved to hear his voice, but the news he carried was harsh. He said it was really bad, and he couldn't find Rachel. After he hung up, Larry came in. Parents were directed to two pickup points- Leawood Elementary School and the Columbine Public Library. Rachel's father, Darrell, went to the elementary school so Beth and Larry went to the library.

Emergency services offered information and lists of safe students were circulated. Counselors offered support to parents and students while local stores and restaurants donated food. Beth recognized students Rachel had been in a play with and asked if they knew about Rachel. They didn't. As the afternoon wore on, Beth was increasingly concerned. The parents were sent to Leawood for the final buses. They had to fill out a missing persons report, and Beth knew exactly what Rachel had been wearing. At 8 pm they were told that no more information was going to be released that evening, and they should go home.

The pastor and his wife accompanied them and comforted Craig at home. He had been in the library when they heard gunshots. A teacher told them to get down. The boys on both sides of him were killed. At 11:30 the next morning they discovered that Rachel was dead. The funeral was held on Saturday, April 24, 1999.

Darrell - A Father's Confusion - Darrell was working when his fiancée, Sandy, called to let him know about what was happening at the school. He headed there, praying for his children, although for some odd reason he was more concerned about Rachel than Craig. He also had a niece and nephew at the school. As he prayed, he kept hearing the words, "This is a spiritual event."

When he saw his brother at the school, he blurted out his concern for Rachel. Others reassured him, telling him they were bringing in busloads of kids. Still, he continued to be worried about Rachel.

Darrell kept in touch with Larry throughout the day by cell phone. He heard that Craig was safe, and that made him relieved but even more concerned for Rachel. Around 3 pm he overheard one of the students mention Rachel's name. The girl said she saw Rachel's body outside the school. Darrell called Larry and told him what he overheard. He asked Larry not to tell Beth since he didn't want her suffering needlessly if Rachel was still alive.

Sandy joined Darrell, and the last busload of children unloaded. Rachel wasn't there. The next morning he received the call confirming that Rachel was dead- shot outside the school where she was eating lunch with a friend.

The media treated them with sensitivity, yet there were many media events that first month. It took many months before the reality of the situation hit him.

They didn't get Rachel's backpack back for months, but they did begin to find things she had written. On May 2, 1998, less than 11 months before her death, Rachel wrote that it would be the last year of her life. As they found more writing, the family learned more about the girl's close relationship with God.



As they read Rachel's journals and letters, Darrell was filled with joy and sorrow.

For millennia, people have had different methods for finding quiet places to communicate with God. Rachel did this through her writing.

Beth knew Rachel loved the Lord and wanted to share her faith with others. The journals opened her eyes to her daughter's inner spiritual life. Her writing was a dialogue with God.

When Rachel was 12 years old, she was visiting relatives in Louisiana. During a church service there, she went to the altar and prayed for God to fill her with the Holy Spirit. Later, she wrote about the experience. After that trip there was a noticeable change in Rachel's life. She seemed more spiritually attuned.

Rachel was very open in the way she talked with God in her letters. She showed her struggles as well as she offered thanks. David in the Bible talked to God about the very issues of his heart, and Rachel did the same. She shared all her fears and doubts as if she were really trying to understand God.

Beth and Darrell had joint custody of the children and Darrell would take them to church with them in Castle Rock on weekends. After her visit to relatives in Louisiana, Rachel asked if she could be baptized at his church. Darrell reflected how Rachel was always a curious child who asked difficult questions. In the years preceding her death, she seemed very intent on understanding God's ways.

Darrell and Rachel went through several deep Bible studies together, and he enjoyed seeing her thoughts on the studies written in the journals. Lindsay, a girl Rachel knew from school, said that Rachel made her think.

Darrell wasn't surprised to learn that Rachel had deep spiritual thoughts. He was however surprised at how concisely she expressed abstract feelings and thoughts. She went beyond religious clichés and asked some really tough questions. Throughout the journals, Rachel showed her struggles with faith yet on the same page she would express a deep conviction that God was in control.

As Darrell read through his daughter's journals, he was surprised at the pain she dealt with in her life that he didn't know about. She wrote about the pain of dealing with her parents' divorce and her sadness at being rejected by friends at school. Instead of trying to get away from the pain, she asked God to help her get through the situation.

Rachel was brutally honest and had an unbridled passion to serve God. Darrell hoped that Rachel could be in inspiration for someone who wanted an example of an honest and intimate relationship with God.

Darrell felt that Rachel really understood what it meant to give up control to God. She understood that God touched humans with grace when they were weak, instead of when humans were strong. On many of the pages in Rachel's journal, there was a repeated question: "Who's in charge of things, us or God?"



After the Columbine killings, Rachel Scott, Cassie Bernall, and others were called modern-day martyrs because of their faith under fire. The girls were not saints, yet Rachel did have a deep faith that others could learn from.

Rachel was a good girl who didn't give her parents many real problems. Still, she wasn't perfect. She would not have wanted to be considered a saint because that wouldn't have been real, and she had a strong desire to be very real about who she was.

Rachel struggled with her imperfections and at one point even wanted a nose job. She was honest with her faults and wrote about them in her journals. She grew a more positive self esteem in the years before her death, and she knew that God made and loved her. She knew she let God down sometimes, but instead of giving up on herself because of her flaws, she just kept humble before God and dependent on Him for improvement.

Everyone deals with temptation and Rachel admitted to her mother that she had been tempted to smoke. She also got a ticket for speeding.

Rachel also struggled with sexual temptation even though her parents didn't learn about that until after her death. She had a boyfriend that she cared about a great deal. She was so worried about holding onto sexual purity that she gave up the boyfriend.

Darrell agreed with Beth on the fact that Rachel would have found it humorous if anyone had called her a saint. Of the five children they had, Rachel was the least maintenance. She had her faults, but she never pretended to be perfect. She struggled with petty jealousies and worried about whether she would be good enough creatively. She was frustrated as she tried to overcome her struggles. Darrell felt that she understood that she wasn't supposed to be perfect, but the God she served was perfect.

"Go And Sin No More" - After Rachel died, Darrell discovered that she had experimented with smoking. She dealt with other temptations as well, but she also understood God's grace. Her writings showed that she understood the difference between spiritual principles and legalistic regulations. One of her favorite parables was the one about the seed and the sod. She knew that humans were made from dirt and human bodies would return to dirt. This dirt was a planting ground for eternal seed. Rachel knew that God was doing wonderful things in her.

Time is Short - Rachel seemed to know that she had limited time. She talked about the fact that she would not get married because she would not live long enough. Her poetry showed that she knew she would die young. Her death challenged her father to think of his own life and accept a challenge to live life fully to its greatest potential on a daily basis.



Chapters 4-6

Chapters 4-6 Summary and Analysis

Many people responded to the Columbine tragedy with shock. How do this happen in a peaceful, supposedly happy place like Littleton, Colorado? Yet around the country, in anonymous Internet chat rooms, others expressed an understanding of where the killers were coming from. They had a feeling of anger and alienation many could identify with. Rachel herself identified with alienation and heartbreak. She particularly struggled with the divorce of her parents.

Darrell claimed responsibility for his part of the failed marriage. He realized he needed God's grace to forgive others as well as himself. Divorce is always tough when children are involved. He and Beth worked things out so they could share the children, and he never spoke negatively about her in front of them. Over time, they resolved their conflicts. Darrell encouraged Christian divorced families to let God bring reconciliation to the family.

Beth's world fell apart in 1989 when she and Darrell separated. She realized she had to get a job, and she regretted that they weren't able to sort out the marriage difficulties. However, like Darrell, she was very grateful that they resolved their problems before Rachel died.

After the divorce, Beth was forced to rely on God more than ever before. She needed healing for her heart, she prayed that her children would be safe and that she could take care of them, and she began to grow closer to the Lord.

After watching all this happen to her parents, Rachel began to make jokes about never getting married. Even when she was young, she would never play house or pretend to get married. She would joke around calling herself Queen Rachel. Her siblings fondly remembered her tendency toward drama.

Since Rachel never demanded much attention from her parents, they spent more time dealing with the other children. Rachel became more private and intimate. She struggled with things, but took them to God. Even when times were really tough and she was struggling, she managed to come out of the difficulties, seeing a brighter side.

Beth was single from June of 1989 through November of 1995. She met Larry in 1994, and while they were dating the children gave him a hard time. For the most part Rachel loved Larry, but there was still some adjustment as they all became a family unit. As before, Rachel took her troubles to the Lord.

A few days before she died, Darrell and Rachel had what he considered to be one of the best conversations they had in years. During the conversation, he talked about getting married to Sandy and how they were looking forward to having grandchildren. Darrell noted that Rachel always got quiet when they talked about her getting married or having



children. Darrell told Rachel that he loved her unconditionally. By the end of the conversation, they were both crying. Looking back, Darrell believed that God ordained the heart-to-heart talk.

After the death of the students, the world received a message that hope can come out of fear. The family's private grief became a national mourning on Saturday, April 24, 1999. Nearly 3,000 people gathered for Rachel's funeral, and international news media as well as cameras from the cable network CNN broadcasted the service to millions of viewers around the world. Those who were close to them shared about Rachel's life, sharing her faith with the world.

Rachel loved nature, seeing it as a gift from God. She was always stopping to look at a flower or to get on her knees to talk with babies.

Rachel didn't just have a passion for babies and nature, she also felt strongly about fighting injustice. She would stand up for anyone she felt was mistreated. As Darrell heard stories about the way Rachel helped others who society shunned, he determined that as he traveled around the country speaking to others, he would share the story of how she helped others and challenge people to start a chain reaction of acts of kindness in Rachel's honor.

After Rachel's death, the family found a story that she had written in entitled "Gloves of Conviction." It was the story of a needy-looking woman who came into the Subway shop where Rachel worked. Rachel saw that the woman could use help, but she didn't help her. After some time, someone else came in and helped the woman. Rachel realized that she lost the opportunity to have compassion on someone else.

Like most other people, Rachel struggled with self-esteem. She also looked for love. From her writing, it was clear that she had an intimate relationship with God, and Darrell believed that the intimacy was the key that unlocked the mystery of Rachel's love for everyone she met and knew.

Darrell shared comments from people who spoke at Rachel's funeral. They commented on the fact that Rachel wanted to live in God's presence at all times and make an impact for him. They spoke about how she influenced them positively and helped them when they were in trouble.

When Darrell and Rachel discussed security and significance, they realized that it only came when Christ is in you.

Rachel wrote about friendship in her journals and described what friendship meant to her.

Both Eric and Dylan fed their hurt and alienation with anger until they finally lashed out. A reporter documented the story in December of 1999.

The reporter missed a main motive. On the tapes, it was obvious from their comments and questions during the shooting spree that the boys shared an anti-Christian hostility.



The killers planned to use almost 100 explosive devices. When they didn't go off as planned, they boys began shooting students one-by-one. A large number of the victims were committed Christians.

Cassie Bernall became a symbol of courage and commitment. She was asked if she believed in God by the killers. She said, "yes" and was killed. Later, there was a dispute regarding whether or not this conversation took place.

Richard ate lunch with Rachel the day she was killed. The story of her final moments was related by him. He was shot and became paralyzed. Rachel was shot three times, and she tried to crawl away. The killers began to walk away then returned and asked her if she believed in God. She said, "You know I do." then Harris sad, "Go be with Him." He shot her in the head, and she died.

Richard blocked the day in his memory, but his mother remembered that Richard initially talked about Rachel's faith. Beth believed her. She remembered how Rachel mimed a Christian story at the school talent show even though it wasn't easy for her. She was constantly reaching out to help others.

Rachel knew about losing things for Christ. A year before her death, she wrote a letter in her journal talking about losing her closest friends because of her passion for Christ.

Those who knew Rachel knew that she was committed to her faith, but she didn't shove her faith no others. Darrell saw the fight between good and evil in the events of the fateful day. He hoped readers would realize that the weapons in the war for Christianity are compassion, kindness, love and forgiveness.



Chapters 7-9

Chapters 7-9 Summary and Analysis

Rachel participated in a play several weeks before her death. She was so busy with the rehearsals that she didn't have time to go to youth cell meetings. She wrote in her journal about how she missed meeting with her Christian friends at Breakthrough. Still, her friends knew that acting was one way Rachel sought to reach out to other students in the high school. She didn't know whether she wanted to be a missionary or an actress, but she really was both. Rachel excelled in finding creative ways to show people Christ's compassion.

A word Beth used to describe the way Rachel lived out her faith was "real." She loved watching her daughter performing the play, and she found it interesting that Rachel pursued things that didn't come easily to her. She was her own worst critic, constantly looking for things she could change and improve. Her latest project was writing a play for the following year's spring performance. She had already written an outline, and the play was about a young person who was a misfit in family and in school. In her journal, Rachel described how much she loved drama, and she was ecstatic when she realized she received the lead in high school play. Rachel was so into her part that she refused to wear a wig for it. Instead, she cut her hair and dyed it purple.

When Rachel witnessed to others, she didn't use the traditional approach. She met them where they were. Beth had concerns about the fact that her daughter hung out with kids who were very different from her and went to parties, but she appreciated the fact that Rachel had a heart for these people. In the Bible, Jesus visited all sorts of people Christians would tend to avoid, Beth appreciated the fact that her daughter did this as well.

Beth received a memory book from some of Rachel's friends several weeks after her funeral. She was shocked at some of the language in the book. It reminded her that they shouldn't expect unchurched people to behave in a sinless manner. Jesus reached out to people, no matter where they were, and Rachel did this as well.

Actress or Missionary? - Rachel had dreams of becoming an actress, but she also wanted to be a missionary. She had planned to go to Africa during the summer of 1999. She couldn't make the trip, but her parents went in her stead. Their first stop in Angola they visited the children's graveyard. It broke Beth's heart as she thought of her own daughter. She knew Rachel would have reached out to the people there, and she determined that she and Larry would carry on her burden to minister to missions.

No Experience Required - Rachel knew that a way to reach people was with simple kindness and love. The family heard several stories about ways she reached out to others.



Chapter 8 - No Solitary Soul - Rachel had an extremely packed schedule in the spring before her death. During this time, she was very active in Breakthrough. The youth meetings helped her keep connected to her God. It was her spiritual lifeline. The group missed her greatly after her death, and one of the group members named Lori wrote about the last times she saw Rachel.

Lori - Lingering Regrets - Rachel had come to the Breakthrough meeting, and they hadn't seen each other in a while. Rachel said she wanted to talk with her, and Lori agreed that she wanted to talk with Rachel as well. The week was busy, and they didn't see each other. The following Monday night, God put it on Lori's heart to call Rachel. She felt that she really needed to talk with her, but she didn't call. Rachel died the next day. It was one of Lori's greatest regrets that she hadn't called.

Beth - Streams of Living Water and Giving and Taking - Although the school had a prayer group, Rachel wasn't part of it. Several of the other students that were killed were part of that group, and their prayer for the year was to have God touch the world using their school. Rachel relied on Breakthrough for spiritual sustenance. The group strongly believed in prayer, and she wrote about it often in her journals.

Lori - No Solo Christian - For Rachel, Breakthrough was a safe environment. Mentors challenged her to grow, and encouraged the students in their desire to pursue God.

A Burning Light - Lori appreciated Rachel's sense of drama and her confidence. To her, Rachel represented passion, and her greatest passion was God and serving God. Rachel never hung out with a particular clique because she appreciated all people.

Not The Center of Attention - Although Rachel was competent and attractive, she never really stuck out. She was a leader in their small group and took the job seriously. Lori noted that Rachel got as much from the group as she gave to them. Rachel once told her that it helped her to have such a strong base of friends who were strong in God as well.

Deep Calling Unto Deep - Rachel would talk about hearing from God. She shared these times with Lori. During 1998, she sometimes talked about a sense of foreboding - that something was "wrong" inside, but she didn't know what that was. She had a literal pain inside her and wondered if she had a disease.

April 20 - When they heard about the events at the high school, Lori and Rachel's friend Sam watched the tragedy unfold on TV. Eventually they realized that Rachel was dead. The next morning Sam went to school even though her parents told her she could stay home. She told Lori that she had prayed for an opportunity to make an impact for Christ at her school. She knew if she went to school that day, people who knew she was Rachel's friend would ask about her, and she would tell them that she was okay because of Jesus.

Aftermath - Lori didn't know what she was going to say at the next Breakthrough meeting, but she heard God speaking to her. She was reminded that they had prayed



for something to make an impact on the city. There were twice as many kids at the meeting that night looking for comfort.

The End of a Dream - The events at Columbine changed the way Lori approached youth ministry. She realized that there were people all around, and the students could die at any time.

A Crown of Life - Rachel's death made a big impact on Rachel's brother Craig, and Breakthrough helped him deal with his grief. He wanted to pick up witnessing where Rachel left off.

Chapter 9 - Challenges of parenting include teaching children to learn to make wise choices and to enjoy life in spite of the struggles. Sometimes parents run the risk of becoming too legalistic. In Rachel's home, they did all they could to help Rachel grow in her relationship with God, understanding His grace.

Darrell - Parenting with Grace - When parenting, Darrell tried to teach his children that Christianity was not just a list of regulations and rules. God wants those who follow him to recognize weakness but be honest about it.

Parenting by Principle - Instead of offering his children a list of rules, Darrell encouraged them to be honest about the application of principles. He felt that it helped the children address deeper issues.

Raising a Mystic - After reading his daughter's journals, Darrell was continuously amazed at her intimacy with God as well as her passion for getting closer to Him.

Beth - A Mother-to-Be's Prayers - Beth started praying for wisdom from God when she became pregnant with her first child. She did studies on relationships, and felt that it helped her children grow in God's grace.

Growing in Love - Patience was difficult for Beth, but it helped her accept the differences in her children. Even though times weren't perfect, Beth felt that Rachel must have sensed the desire in her heart to be faithful to God and to raise her children with her godly influence.

Try a Little Tenderness - Beth felt that rules were important and that children needed to know their boundaries. She felt they also needed to understand support. She was thankful that Rachel was open enough to share the times she messed up.



Chapters 10-11

Chapters 10-11 Summary and Analysis

Dylan seemed like a normal guy. If anything, he was kinder than most others. There were moments that foreshadowed trouble, though. He and Eric burglarized the van and were part of the Trench Coat Mafia. When he was bowling he would sometimes say "Heil Hitler!"

Eric was an excellent student with a good sense of humor, but he was also a prankster who enjoy playing violent video games. He has a website filled with angry, aggressive statements. He began using a notebook to detail his plans for the Columbine shootings a year before he and Dylan followed through with the plan.

Darrell felt that the events of that tragic day were a result of peer pressure and a lack of parental intervention.

The author felt that many young people today were raised in a culture that was devoid of spiritual and moral exposure - a spiritual vacuum.

Beth too felt that peer pressure was pivotal in this tragedy. The boys took their insecurities and hurts and nurtured a sense of hate.

Gun control became a major issue once again after the shootings. Even though they were underage, the boys had been able to get their guns easily.

While some parents who lost children at Columbine went to the gun control hearing, Darrell went to another meeting. He felt that guns were not the reason people die. People died because of murder in the hearts of others.

Even if there were a gun control law, it probably would have been violated according to Beth. The boys violated 18 laws that day. The real problems were desensitization and a desire for vengeance.

Good can come out of tragedy and Rachel's parents travel around talking about the ongoing battle between good and evil.

Eric and Rachel were born a few days apart in the same location. One embraced God, forgiveness and reaching out to others while the other nurtured hatred. Rachel wanted to cultivate a chain reaction of good while Daryll wanted to create a chain reaction of harm.

Rachel challenged others to be aware that choices last for eternity.



Forgiveness was difficult for best. It was a daily struggle. She constantly had to choose to make a decision to forgive because she knew that God would do something beautiful through the horrible experience.

About a month after Rachel died, Darrell woke up with a sense of destiny and purpose. He prayed about it and got an immediate answer when the phone rang. A man named Frank asked him if he would consider speaking to others around the country. He wanted to offer financial support. Shortly before Rachel's funeral Frank dreamed about her eyes and a flow of tears watering something, and he asked Darrell if that meant anything to him. Darrell had no idea what he was talking about.

Several days later, the sheriffs' department called to let them know that they could release Rachel's backpack. There was a bullet hole in it so they had kept it to examine it. When they opened the final diary in a backpack, they looked at the last page and saw a drawing of her eyes with a stream of tears watering a rose. There were 13 tears falling from the eyes, and there were 13 murders that day. A year before that, she had drawn a rose growing out of a Columbine plant. She had also drawn a cross with the words "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man would lay down his life for his friends."

Darrell felt that the Columbine tragedy was a spiritual wake-up call for the young generation. Rachel's death was not in vain. The grace of God turned the tragedy into a triumph.



Characters

Rachel Scott

Rachel Scott was a 17-year-old who attended Columbine High School in Colorado. She was a creative girl known for her kindness to others. While many students joined cliques, Rachel tried to befriend everyone. If she noticed someone who was an underdog, she went out of her way to befriend them.

Rachel was known for her belief in God. She was very dedicated to her religion and wanted to share her faith with others. She didn't preach to them, instead she shared her faith through her actions.

This does not mean that the girl was a saint. She was a typical teen who struggled with typical teen issues such as self-esteem and temptation. The difference between Rachel and other teens was that she took her struggles and wrote about them in journals that were conversations between herself and God.

Brutally honest in nature, Rachel shared her thoughts, praises, and struggles in songs, letters, artwork and poetry to God. She had a premonition that her life would be short, even writing that it was the last year of her life within a year of her death. Her goal was to live her life to its fullest.

Rachel had a passion for drama. She struggled over whether she should be an actor or a missionary. The girl also had a passion for her youth cell group. This was where she received spiritual rejuvenation as she gathered on a regular basis with other young Christians. Rachel was killed in the Columbine shootings after a killer asked if she believed in God. She answered in the affirmative and was killed.

Craig Scott

Craig Scott was the brother of Rachel. His sister drove him to school regularly, including the day she was killed. They went their separate ways, and he never saw her alive again. Craig was in the school library with two of his friends. A teacher ran in and yelled for the kids to get down. He crouched under a table with Matt and Isaiah, and they were both shot to death.

The killers left the room and Craig prayed. He felt he heard God's voice telling him to get everyone out. They did so, escaping before the killers came back. Craig was very concerned about his sister.

Later, he determined to follow where Rachel left off as he reached out to witness to others about God. He wanted to share her unconditional love.



Darrell Scott

This was Rachel's father. He was once a pastor and is now a speaker.

Beth Nimmo

This was Rachel's mother. She was at work the day she heard about the shootings.

Larry

This was Rachel's step-father. They had a good relationship.

Bethanee

This was Rachel's older sister. She called their mom when news of the shootings broke.

Pastor Bruce

This man and his wife were there to comfort the family as they waited to hear about Rachel. He and his wife comforted Craig.

Sandy

This was Darrell's fiancée at the time of the shooting. She called to tell him the news.

Cassie Bernall

This was another student who was killed. She also was known for her faith in God.

Eric Harris

This was one of the shooters. His website was shut down due to his inappropriate angry rants.

Dylan Klebold

This character was one of the shooters. He was like most kids, only nicer. Every once in a while he did something odd that foreshadowed trouble such as when he would salute and say "Heil Hitler" while bowling.

Richard Castaldo

This is the boy who ate lunch with Rachel when she was killed. He too was shot and became paralyzed.



Objects/Places

Littleton, Colorado

This small, affluent town is where Rachel lived with her mother and step-father.

Columbine High School

This is the school Rachel attended. It became internationally known after the shootings.

Acura

This little red car belonged to Rachel. It became a shrine.

Leawood Elementary School

This is one of the two pickup points parents of students were sent to so they could re-connect with their children. Darrell went here.

Columbine Public Library

This is one of the two pickup points parents of students were sent to so they could reconnect with their children. Beth and Larry went here.

Chapel Hill Mortuary

This is a place that offered help and support. They told the parents about a casket that people could sign.

Castle Rock, Colorado

This is where Darrell took his children to church on weekends. Rachel asked to be baptized here.

Shreveport, Louisiana

Rachel went to visit relatives here. While she was in a church service when she was 12, she asked God to fill her with the Holy Spirit.



Trinity Christian Center

This was where the funeral for Rachel Scott was held. Reporters from international news media and cable networks broadcast the service to millions of viewers.

Subway

This is where Rachel worked.

Breakthrough

This is the group Rachel attended to grow in her faith.

Journals

This is what Rachel used to document her thoughts in letters to God.

Backpack

This is what the parents got back months after Rachel's death. It contained more of her writing including a shocking image.

Guns

This is what the killers used against the other students and teachers.



Themes

Live Life to its Fullest

Rachel was known for her passion for life. From a very young age, she seemed to know that she wouldn't live a very long life. When she was young, she never played house like other children. In her journals, less than a year before she died, she commented that it would be her last year of life. This could have been why she embraced life and Christianity the way she did.

Rachel didn't worry about fitting in properly when it came to being kind to others and living out her faith. Her journal was full of prayers and letters in which she showed her struggles. Friends turned away from her because of her faith, but she still clung to her God. Instead of preaching at them, she used drama to reach out to others. She performed a religious mime and wrote religious songs. When she saw people alone, she reached out to them. For instance, she asked a boy out after learning that he had never had a date. She thought the world would be a much better place for people on Earth if everyone took some time to help each other. She, herself, lived life to the fullest as she became active in drama, her job, Bible studies with her father, and her church group.

Faith in God

Rachel's belief in God was extremely important to her. Her father was a minister until her parents divorced. When she was 12, Rachel was visiting some relatives in Louisiana, and she asked the Holy Spirit to work in her life. After that trip, her parents noticed a change in her. Her faith in God was extremely important to her. Her father did several devotionals with her and noticed that she went beyond surface questions, truly trying to understand God and what God wanted from her life.

Rachel didn't hesitate to question God. Even as she expressed her doubts, she never lost her faith in him. Throughout her journal, she wrote regularly about God's love for her and her desire to serve him in the best way she possibly could. One way she did this was by showing kindness to others no matter what their circumstances and perceived worth. She didn't judge others by appearance. Rachel bolstered herself spiritually by attending youth cell meetings called Breakthrough. These meetings were extremely important to her. She was in a play several weeks before her death, and the play practices prevented her from going to Breakthrough. She wrote about how much she missed it in her journals.

Rachel had such great respect for God and such a passion for Him that she broke up a relationship with her boyfriend because she was worried about temptation and sexual impurity. Her faith turned other friends away from her and that hurt her, but it didn't prevent her from clinging to her God.



A Chain Reaction

Rachel's father and brother travel around the country, encouraging youth to begin a chain reaction of kindness. They do this in Rachel's memory, based on a paper she wrote entitled "My Ethics, My Codes of Life." Rachel believed in the core values of trust, compassion, honesty, love, and the desire to believe the best about people. She believed that if one reached out to help someone else, it might inspire them to do kindness toward others.

The authors contrasted this with a chain reaction mentioned by Ed Harris. He had made videos during the year before he shot the people in the school. In the video he talked about a chain reaction. He had planned to kill hundreds of innocents students. This would lead to a chain reaction of a time of terror and chaos.

Although Rachel and Ed were born and raised in the same area, they had very different ideas on what sort of chain reactions ought to take place. This is why Darrell and Craig feel it's so important to travel around encouraging others to focus on kindness. It gave purpose to Rachel's death.



Style

Perspective

"Rachel's Tears: The Spiritual Journey of Columbine Martyr Rachel Scott" by Beth Nimmo and Darrell Scott with Steve Rabey was written primarily by Rachel's parents. Although they were divorced, they had obtained an amicable relationship before Rachel was killed so they went through the grief process together. They were both involved in their daughter's life.

Both parents wanted to use this book as a witness. To do so, they were brutally honest in their feelings about God and their daughter's relationship with God. They shared parts of her journal to emphasize points they were trying to make.

Tone

This novel is subjective and written from the point-of-view of family members and friends after the events occurred. The book is unique because it also highlights many parts of Rachel's journals, which were written before the events occurred. This gives the reader a rounded view of events that occurred from Rachel's foreshadowing, to the events of the tragic day as newscasters commented, and to the reactions of family and friends. The writers want to get a message across in the book. They want to show how good can come out of bad, and they want to share God's love. Due to this, the book sometimes comes across as dry and preachy.

Structure

"Rachel's Tears: The Spiritual Journey of Columbine Martyr Rachel Scott" by Beth Nimmo and Darrell Scott with Steve Rabe begins with a short foreword by Josh McDowell and a longer Foreword by Wes Yoder. These are followed by an Introduction from Rachel's parents. It explains what they hope readers will get from the book.

The main part of the book consists of 11 chapters. The chapters are relatively equal in length and are divided into sections written from different perspectives. Most of these sections are written by Beth, Rachel's mom, and Darrell, Rachel's dad. Other sections are by siblings and friends.

Each chapter is numbered and titled. The title is significant to the chapter. Most of the chapters begin with a few paragraphs detailing the message of the chapter. When a section is from a specific perspective, the author's name appears above the section. Each section within a perspective is broken into subsections with headers. Throughout the book, there are images depicting Rachel's actual journal entries (words and images). The writers refer to these sections in their summaries.

The book concludes with an Appendix that highlights the organization founded to spread the news that the Columbine event was spiritual. It tells how to donate funds and how to contact the Ambassador Speakers Bureau if interested in speaking engagements for Darrell Scott and Beth Nimmo.



Quotes

"Forgiveness is not pardon. Forgiveness is an attitude, while pardon is an action" (Introduction).

"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" (Introduction).

"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" (Chapter 1).

"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" (Chapter 1).

"Real violence has real consequences" (Chapter 1).

"I heard these words again and again in my heart: This is a spiritual event, a spiritual event" (Chapter 1).

"That night I could not see the positive impact her life and death would have on millions of people. All I could see was a huge hole in my future that could never be" (Chapter 1).

"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" (Chapter 4).

"Though few American teens are probably as angry and hate filled as Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were that day, many are apparently as lost and alienated as these two were" (Chapter 4).

"She realized it was okay for her to be weak because she knew weakness is where God's strength is made perfect in all of us" (Chapter 5).

"I almost cried with joy when she trusted me enough to come to me with her flaws and failures" (Chapter 9).

"Our parenting should mirror God's love for us, His patience with our failures, and His amazing grace, which restores us to a right relationship with Him" (Chapter 9).



Topics for Discussion

Why did Rachel say her school was filled with "halls of tragedy?"

What happened to Rachel?

How did Rachel show that her faith was important to her?

How did Rachel fit in socially?

Rachel talked about a chain reaction, as did one of the killers. Compare and contrast these chains.

What were some of the unique/eerie/interesting entries Rachel's family and friends found in her journal?

Rachel's family feels that her story can show how good can come from bad. Why do they think this and do you agree?