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My Always and Forever Friend

BY HEATHER BLANTON

It was a trying time in my life. I struggled with various hardships, both physical and mental, and had an empty space inside. It started with the death of a dear friend of mine, shortly followed by the death of an even closer aunt. I thought to myself, *how could a god be so cruel as to let the only joy in my life be ripped from me?*

I hated God for the things that happened to me and began to lose all hope. I no longer prayed. At church, I tried hard to close my ears and mind to all references of Christ. I continued to do this until I totally threw Christ out of my life.

My family lost hope in me and they began to fall apart. They no longer spoke to me about my problems or my faith. I had no control of anything. My emotions blasted from one extreme to another. Mostly, I felt anger because my uncle was sick with cancer and he was the only love I had left. (Fortunately his love is still strong, although each day his continued fight with cancer is a struggle.)

I hit depression hard and stayed medicated to numb my emotions. I felt alone—like I was the only person suffering this way. As others shared their feelings and problems with me, I understood I was not alone. But still, there was nothing but emptiness and misery inside. In desperation, I did things I regret—things that left mental and physical scars.

One Saturday I went to church, and as usual tuned out everything. I sang a few words with my group, but they meant nothing to me. As I left the church, two friends, Jessica and Rachel, asked for rides home.

It happened at Jessica's house—I completely broke down. For the first time, I freely let my emotions out and let others know how I really felt. I was ashamed. I hated what I had become and was terrified of being crushed

by others. I had a mask to hide behind, a fake identity to hide my true self. And now it all burst from within me, so fast my masquerade was shattered. I was sure I would never have my friends again.

But then, the most remarkable thing happened. My friends told me just what I needed to hear. They told me someone did care for me—they cared and so did God. Even though I felt abandoned, they assured me He was there to pull me through; it wasn't too late to reach out.

I'm working hard now to give myself up to God, to let Him pull me through, and to reach to others for help instead of hurting myself. And so, I promise it's the last time—the last time I'll ever reject God, my always and forever Friend and Shelter in the time of storm.

So that's my challenge to you as well. Give up yourself and give your problems fully to God. Trust me, He WILL give you rest.

Heather Blanton is a senior at Andrews Academy. She will receive a \$100 scholarship because her article was selected for publication.

Heather Blanton (left) and her friend, Ashley Saint-Phard

