

Dear Jesus

By Erin Beall

Today is Wednesday, January 2, 2008 and even though I have shared much with you about this last year, I wanted to make sure that I have told you everything

A few months ago I ran into an old acquaintance. As he was asking all the normal questions people do when they haven't seen you in awhile, I tried to answer all of his questions with a happy, positive reply, but at the end of our conversation I told him that I didn't think that this would go down as a stellar year for me and maybe next year would be a better one. As you know that was before I met you in a new way.

My husband and I know two couples that have been our closest friends; one couple for over ten years and the other for over six years. We did everything together; vacations, holidays, birthdays, carpool, even our children were best friends. The six of us had something that was very special. The three of us women were great friends in our own right. One of these women lives only one street over and we talked several times a day. I don't have any sisters, but with them I felt what it must be like to have sisters. I know they cared about me very much also. They were like my family and I loved them, but somewhere along the way things became unhealthy. I became unhealthy to these relationships. I now know that I looked to them for my happiness, my entire happiness and

having them in my life no longer became a want, but a need.

I think that for a long time I knew that there was something inside me that was broken. I just didn't know what it was. I looked to others to be fixed (to complete me so to speak) through my husband in my marriage, through peers in my job. I even looked to things; plastic surgery, the perfect fitting pair of jeans and even TV in the Oprah show. For many years in these friendships I thought I fooled them; I thought that they really didn't know just how lost I really was. They even tried to be for me what was lacking inside, but it was impossible for them to meet my needs. It would have been impossible for anyone to do that.

I think after awhile they felt it was becoming a huge burden; being my friend and lifting me up emotionally. It was a job they had not signed up for and they no longer could or wanted to do anymore. (Don't get me wrong, I made my own mistakes with them over the years too.)

So, in April of last year they ended the friendship. One of them said to me that they wanted a lighter more of an arms length friendship. I think all of us knew that would be, at this point in time, impossible for me. I did everything I could think of to keep the friendship from falling apart. I sent cards, emails, brought food by their house. I called them many times, but they screened all my calls. I even begged, but in the end I only came across as needy and desperate and they couldn't run away fast enough. I had zero pride left and even less self esteem. Because husbands support their wives, it was inevitable that the husbands broke off contact too. A huge loss for my husband and children also, and I felt responsible and guilty.

The sense of loss I felt became overwhelming and I unraveled faster than I knew was possible. At work I felt like I was hanging on to my sanity by a thread. I tried to keep all of this buried deep down inside, and keep my poker face on. Some days it was all I could do to keep from curling up in a ball under my desk and crying. Without my girlfriends, the job of filling my days became a very difficult task. I would run into them several times a week at the kid's school or the store and I could see how uncomfortable this made them. To see the look on their faces when they would see me became incredibly painful. I felt all they wanted was to have me go away.

I did end up going away and where I went to was a very, very dark place. A place that I never thought I would ever go to. While all this was taking place, I had a loving, worried, scared family to think about and I knew that they needed me and I had to pull it together. This only made me feel even sadder and filled me with more anxiety. Jesus, there is an expression people use these days called "Looser" and that was just what I felt like. I questioned everything about my life. I could no longer tell you anything about who, or what I was. I could only tell you all that I wasn't. I was living my life a little scared every day.

I realized that the ending of these friendships was not the reason for my unraveling, but being alone revealed how dependent I was and began the unraveling process. To tell the truth I think it had been coming for a long time, but my friendships allowed me to hide from it. I could no longer see the blessings under my own roof, and my family seemed to be just one more group of people in my life to let down. All the sadness, and all the things in my life that I had not dealt with, had not reconciled, or refused to repair; all these became one big hurt and I could no longer separate any of them. I wanted to change

almost everything about myself, but with out my friend's input or guidance how would I know what about me to keep, and what about me would I leave behind? (The "old" Erin as Paul says.) That's where you come in Jesus.

Early last year, before any of this, my mom told me about a class at our church that was many months away called the ALPHA Class. (God 101 in a nutshell). I could tell that this was something that she was not going to let go of easily, so I told her that I would take it with her. You can agree to anything that is six months away. In the mean time I continued to unravel and before I knew it, the class was starting the next night. I knew that the class was only twelve weeks long, but I was so tired, so so tired. The kind of tired that can't be addressed in a weekend of sleeping in. As the ALPHA class started I realized, I also was starting in a new direction, and I knew that my life was changing.

My knowledge of you Jesus, and of the Bible were almost nothing to say the least, I mean I knew the main characters of the Bible; you know Mary, Joseph, Moses, but coincidentally, they all seemed to resemble Charlton Hesston. I was sure that I was the ALPHA class idiot. As the weeks went by and I heard Nicky Gumbel (the speaker on the ALPHA class DVD's) talk, I was surprised. I thought all the things I would learn would be about things that happened thousands of years ago, and some of that was true, but most of what I learned was how relevant you and your words were to my life and how relevant they were to my life right now. As I listened, and as I questioned, and I read, I started to feel less broken and there might possibly be a light at the end of the tunnel and that light was not necessarily attached to a train. I became hungry for your words and to get to know you better. I always thought that I would get around to you, I was waiting for the right time,

kind of like that downstairs hall closet, and before I knew it twenty years have gone by.

There is so much Jesus, I have learned through ALPHA, not only about you, but also about God (your Father), and even about the Holy Spirit. In reading the Bible you said "How can you help your friend to see the speck in their eye, when you have a log in your own" These words have given me much to think about.

I have prayed to you so much over the last year. I prayed that you would change my friend's minds, their hearts, and for them to forgive me for whatever I did. That must of not have been part of your plan for me. As my knowledge of you and my love for you have grown, I have thought a lot about what your plan could possibly be for me and I was afraid that you and I weren't even on the same page. The truth is that maybe nothing but the loss of such dear friends would have brought me to you. If that is the case, than I am forever grateful, but I would have given anything if you had picked another way.

Even what I would define as a miracle has changed. I thought a miracle was an unexplained healing of a terminal illness, a parting of some kind of body of water, the blind suddenly seeing. Definitely, only something that happens for other people. I see a miracle now can take on many different forms, it can even happen in my life. I believe you did send me a miracle this year. I can even see that miracle might just be ME!

In wrapping up this letter to you, I want you to know that I have felt your love for me, I have heard you talk to my heart and one of the many things you told me was that "the forgiveness you were so desperately looking for didn't need to come from your friends, but needed to come from me (Jesus)". That is where I would find peace, true peace,

the first step in healing and moving on. Because of how much my friends have hurt me, I also realized that the kind of forgiveness I needed to give could only come through receiving your grace and your guidance. I have had a lot of clarity about a lot of things this year. I thought with some of this clarity the sense of loss about my friends would lessen, but it hasn't much. I feel their absence everyday. (More work for you and I to do together.)

I am at a pivotal point in my life and I can feel it, a fork in the road I guess you could say. I'm still not sure whether to turn left or right, but whatever direction I choose, I know you will be with me. Even if I choose the wrong way, you will always be with me.

The ALPHA class ended on December 5th and on December 6th in the company of some people in the ALPHA class, I asked you to come into my life and live always in my heart. I also know that is something you don't want me to ask of you once, but something I will ask you everyday, that is, LIVE in my heart.

In Matthew, chapter 7, verse 34, Jesus you wrote, and I think you wrote it with me in mind "So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time."

Thank you Jesus... This might prove to be my most stellar year yet. In your love,

Erin Beall