

How God Broke the Cycle of Poverty for One Teen Mom

Thirty-six years ago, there was a single, young woman about to give birth. She was young and didn't know how she could afford a child without her parents' help. She hadn't talked to her former boyfriend in months. She had no idea how to reach him. How to tell him she was having his child.

This young woman attended church some, yet her dialogue with God was stilted. How could God let this happen to her? What would her life be like now?

A baby girl was born, and upon holding her child this young lady knew things would be OK. Perhaps this baby was a gift, not a burden as she supposed. So this woman raised her daughter the best she could, and while she wanted to give her child more than she had...

History has a way of repeating itself.

When the daughter became a young woman she found herself in the same situation—living at home, pregnant, scared. The daughter knew she could raise this child. After all, her mom had done it. But what would her life be like? How could God let this happen to her?

If you haven't guessed already. I was the daughter.

Born to a single mom, as a teenager becoming a single mom myself. At age 17, God gave me a son. My boyfriend was out of the picture, and I faced raising a child alone with little education, no money and maybe, according to the world, little

hope for my future.

Now if you take this story at face value,
I am nothing more than a statistic.

According to government research, most daughters of young mothers go on to be teen mothers themselves. They face lives of hardship, living on welfare for the most part—becoming a burden rather than an asset to society.

Yet, I am not a statistic. And do you know why I'm not a statistic? Because God doesn't do them.

Did you hear that?

God doesn't do statistics. In fact, He
likes to blow them out of the water.

You see, God has a history of seeing something that no one else does. Like seeing a king in a shepherd boy named David, seeing an apostle in a young zealot named Saul, and seeing a mighty warrior in a frightened nobody named Gideon.

God has X-ray eyes that see right through any outward characteristics or any national statistics. His X-ray eyes scan down to the heart.

And what did God see? He must have seen something worthwhile. Because . . .

At age 43, I'm a multi-published author of magazine articles, Bible-study notes, curriculum and 15 books. My book for teenage mothers was nominated for a prestigious award. I'm a national speaker, traveling to share God's good news.

While in my 20s, I helped to launch a Crisis Pregnancy Center, helped start numerous abstinence programs, and launched support groups for Teen Moms.

Now, if I were not a believer, all these would be things I could really tout. But honestly, I can say that it doesn't have to do with me at all.

It's about:

- A BIG God with BIG dreams.
- A God who has made an agreement with me that is eternal, final and sealed.
- A God who is constantly looking after my safety and success.
- A God who is strong in my weakness.
- A God who sees the future, sees the past, and has a perfect plan for me.

Well, I guess the whole truth is that I do have something to do with it. It's only a little something, but I guess it makes a pretty big difference.

See, God can be all those things in my life only if I let Him.

There is one thing I must do ... and that is *be available*. Of course, I didn't just wake up one day and say, "Here I am. God, use me." I didn't just clear my schedule and wait for God to show up.

Rather, the steps toward my availability were a work-in-progress. They started on the day I was six months pregnant and accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I like to look at that as Day One.

In those 26 years from then to now, I've learned a lot.

Lesson #1: Sometimes being available means stepping away from status quo.

For me that meant moving 1,000 miles away. Seriously, 1,000 miles. You see, after I gave my heart to the Lord, I birthed a beautiful son. Not too long later, God gave me an amazing, Christian husband and two more children. Then He asked us to move ... (in a roundabout way.)

First, God put us into a community of like-minded people. Our friends longed for a simple life away from the hurry and worry in California.

Next, He placed a desire in our hearts to raise our children in a better place. A place called Montana. We'd talk about it with our friends, we'd dreamt about it, and hoped that many someday it would come true.

Then, we decided to pray. My husband and I got on our knees and prayed that IF it was God's desire, He would make it clear. John was just graduated from college, and I was raising three small children under the age of 5.

We knew we'd be leaving our families, leaving our friends, leaving everything we knew. We had no job in Montana, no money to move, in fact we'd never even been there before! Still, we had a desire. One we couldn't shake.

At the time, my husband sold computers on commission in a small store. He'd usually sell one or two a week. He went to work the next day after our joint prayer and sold 11 computers! Enough to pay off our current bills, enough to move and live on. It was the confirmation we'd been looking for.

So we did it. We packed up our three kids

and moved. Our families thought we were crazy.

They were sure we were joining some commune or something. We saw the town of Kalispell for the first time as we drove in with our stuff. Within one week we were renting a house. Within three weeks, my husband had a far better job than he had in California. Within six months we'd purchased our first house. Within one year we were plugged into an amazing church and ministering to children in ways we'd always dreamed of.

We serve a BIG God with BIG dreams.

You have to believe this: If you don't believe in a BIG God with BIG dreams, there's no use being available. But when you trust that fact, trust God completely. Trust His dreams, *then* you can also trust Him to lead you to the right path.

Seeing God at work. Seeing what He did with our lives when we were available made me hungry for more. I wanted to experience God at work like that again.

Henry and Mel Blackaby say, "Watching the activity of God from a distance can never compare with the thrill of being fully involved in the Spirit's active work."

You have to want God. Not want to work for Him. Or learn about Him. But want *Him*. You have to want to experience Him at work in your lives. You have to be hungry for what only He can give—a hope and a future.

Tricia Goyer *has written more than 35 books, including both novels that delight and entertain readers and nonfiction titles that offer encouragement and hope. She has also published more than 500 articles in national publications such as Guideposts, Thriving Family, Proverbs 31 and HomeLife Magazine.*