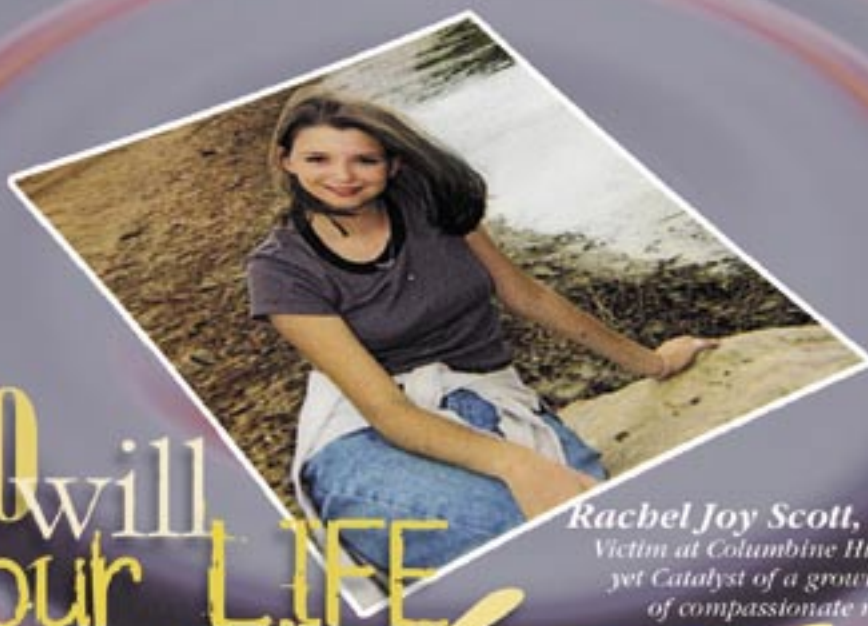


# Visitor

Communicating within the Brethren in Christ Family

MARCH/APRIL 2001



Who will  
your LIFE  
Impact  
today?

*Rachel Joy Scott,  
Victim at Columbine High School 2 years ago,  
yet Catalyst of a growing Chain Reaction  
of compassionate ministry today.*

...and how?

A Compelling Vision for Compassion

"We need to kick start a revolution.  
We need to get a chain reaction going here!"  
-Eric Harris, Columbine Shooter

"I have this theory that if one person  
can go out of their way to show compassion,  
then it will start a chain reaction of the same."  
-Rachel Joy Scott, Columbine Victim

The amazing thing about these two statements is the fact that they were both made by classmates at Columbine High School at the same time, in March of 1999, just one month before the tragedy in which their paths would cross one final time.

In his recent book, **Chain Reaction**, Darrell Scott, Rachel's father, writes, "It was as though these two teenagers laid down a double challenge to their entire generation."

Rachel Scott believed that she could make a difference in her high school, and through her death, her thoughts and deeds toward intentional acts of kindness have been amplified and have started a ripple effect that is being felt around the world.

Adapted from the cover of **Chain Reaction**  
(© 2001, Thomas Nelson)



# Choosing Our Part in A Chain of Compassion

Rachel Scott had a vision for compassion.

She believed she could start a chain reaction for good that could rise out of Columbine High School—the start of a spiritual revolution. She wrote about it in her journals, and she even once drew a picture illustrating that very idea. In fact, she even seemed to have had an uncanny sense that she might not be around long enough to see how that vision turned out.

On the morning of April 20, 1999, as she sat on the lawn of her school and shared lunch with a friend, she became one of the first victims of two other classmates' determined effort to start their own chain reaction—only theirs was one more deeply seeded in hate and violence.

Regretfully, over the last two years we have seen various ways in which the shooters have succeeded, as reports of other school violence continues to emerge. Thankfully, I have also recently had the chance to now see Rachel's vision continuing to grow as well.

On several counts I am thankful for the presentation that Darrell Scott (Rachel's father) and the rest of Rachel's family are making around the country at various youth rallies as an extended memory of Rachel. Theirs is an intentional effort to see a significant and radical good rise out of the incomprehensible evil they were dealt. And, at the base of the idea they now carry is an idea so simple that it is likely one we are all consistently neglecting, and in doing so, we are failing to help forward this very important chain reaction.

Far too often the spectacles created out of events as large in scope as the incident at Columbine subject us to unrelenting interviews and stories on the terrorists, such as these two students who opened fire on their classmates and school. The pair at Columbine even intentionally fed the expected media frenzy by creating a set of video tapes. Sure enough, they ended up the focus of even *more* coverage that perpetuated their story, long after the original incident and our focus on its victims had begun to fade.

Even without provided material, the media will continually interview and continue to profile a murderer such

as Timothy McVeigh, who delivered his destructive blow to Oklahoma City several years ago. As this is being written, weeks before McVeigh's scheduled execution, television networks and other media are already tripping over each other while vying for optimal position to cover that "event". In the build up, we have had interviews on TV and in magazines, and we continue to have extended news coverage on his twisted opinions and the sheer personification of unrepentent evil he offers up so freely to the frequent requests and the subsequent viewing audience that tunes in to listen.

Meanwhile, how many among us can remember even one of the names of his 168 victims? Or, how many stories have we sought on elements of good that may have emerged from that mayhem?

Darrell Scott's message—self-admittedly an intentional effort to extend his daughter's personal crusade for a revolution of compassion—is the antithesis of that which normally rises out of tragedy of this magnitude. He, along with Rachel's mother Beth Nimmo, Rachel's brother Craig (who shared the horrific experience at Columbine High School that day) and other family and friends, have all opened up their lives and inspected them before us as an encouragement for each us to share in the lessons they have learned from their newly dealt harsh realities.

I have watched responses to the presentation of Rachel Scott's life, and have now read and absorbed many of the pieces that Rachel's family have so intricately woven together to relay her story (with Rachel herself helping, though her journals), and I agree with Darrell's feeling that the Columbine tragedy can be noted as a spiritual event, maybe one big enough to nudge many of us out our slumbers of disregard.

Still, the quieter revolution of good that is emerging from the incidents at Columbine will not get as much coverage as the continuing spectacles of evil. In fact, it will likely take a bit more concentrated effort on our parts to even maintain it in our own memories. Considering far less spectacle is attached to the rise of good, it's guaranteed not to garner that much coverage. There is certainly not that much mention of it in the reporting and commentary that followed the original incident.

In fact, somehow Rachel's story had stayed off my horizon until now. It's easy to see how, having now gone back and re-read several of the magazines from which I most likely got my initial information.

To be fair, there is a full one-page article mentioning Darrell Scott's speaking tour in a December 1999 issue of *Time*, but it follows several pages of their controversial cover story reviewing the infamous tapes made by Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris as they planned their melee.

*A Chain of Compassion continues on the next page*



It's noteworthy that without Rachel's journals to provide insight, none of us – not even her family – would be able to as richly know her fairly simple, yet compelling, visions for compassion.

Nor could we share in her thoughts on the struggles she faced as she tried to live out that vision amidst all the other foibles and growing pains of her young Christian life. Certainly there is plenty of testimony to show she actively demonstrated what she felt, but her journals further enlighten us on the depth of strong thoughts and convictions that drove what might otherwise be overlooked as just a simple idea.

Even almost two years after her death in that horrible incident at Columbine, her challenge to make a choice to walk with Jesus and to shine as His example of love among those who surround us remains a compelling testimony, for in its simplicity it has the potential to touch every one of us.

At the event I attended with our youth group, many teens approached the alter in response to a challenge to them to change direction and dedicate themselves to a new life in Christ, a challenge conceivably given extra weight by the demonstration that life is short and can unexpectedly come to an abrupt end.

But in ending his presentation, Darrell Scott challenges *all* of us, through his daughter's notes, that each and every one of us is uniquely attached to a circle of people just like this to whom we could be reaching out, and one of the challenges he is carrying in Rachel's stead is the call for those who will hear it to pick up her torch of compassion and reach out in each of our own environments..

Many of the entries in Rachel Scott's journals included poems and art that explored a yearning desire to know and serve her God. A startling aspect of several entries is an uncanny sense of premonition for the events that would arise from incidents to come at Columbine High School.

In the lower right of the picture directly above, Rachel drew a bleeding rose growing out of a Columbine flower.

Books on Rachel Scott (all available at Christian Light and other Christian bookstores):  
**Rachel's Tears**, written by Darrell Scott and Beth Nimmo, Rachel's parents.  
**Chain Reaction**, by Darrell Scott

Web sites dedicated to Rachel Scott and the other victims of Columbine:  
[www.rachelscott.com](http://www.rachelscott.com)  
[www.racheljoyscott.com](http://www.racheljoyscott.com)  
[www.columbineredemption.com](http://www.columbineredemption.com)

Details on the Scott family presentations are available through the Ambassador Agency in Nashville, TN, who helped provide information and pictures for this article. All photos are used with permission. ([www.AmbassadorAgency.com](http://www.AmbassadorAgency.com))

## A Chain of Compassion *continued from previous page*

To their credit, *Time* was also the mainstream magazine in which I did find two other items that sought to lend balance to the equation. In their second week of coverage, commentator Roger Rosenblatt dedicated a note of memorial directly written to Rachel Scott<sup>1</sup>, and in the following issue, reporter Nancy Gibbs was even allowed the speculation that “with each passing day of shock and grief you could almost hear the church bells tolling in the background, calling the country to a different debate, a careful conversation in which even Presidents and anchormen behave as though they are in the presence of something bigger than they are.” She went on to note that, “If the killers gave evil a face, the victims lent theirs to grace.”<sup>2</sup>

It is worth noticing that various events emerging from Columbine have advanced the Christian testimonies of not only Rachel, but *several* of the students killed that day, though all of these have often been relegated to a lesser level of coverage. In some cases they have even been treated with a somewhat irreverent sense of skepticism. You’ve likely heard of Cassie Bernall, somewhat immortalized by the phrase “She said ‘Yes’”, but you have now also likely seen her story undermined by coverage of an uncertainty as to whether she actually said those exact words.

Something you don’t hear nearly as often is that there were very likely *several* similar exchanges between the killers and their victims that day.

Somewhat downplayed in a lot of the overall coverage is the fact that devout Christian students were singled out as one of the shooters’ targets, clearly revealed in some of the tyrades the pair made for their notorious video tapes. Rachel had even apparently witnessed to Eric Harris, her killer, only weeks before, and John Tomlin, another of the victims, was known for intentionally leaving his Bible open on the dash of his pick-up truck in hopes that others would be prodded just by seeing it there.

Even within the last month, *Time* has once again focused on the ripples of Columbine as a cover story, noting how the success of the chain reaction sought by Eric Harris may in fact be seen emerging in a growing string of school incidents. Sadly, in many of these new incidents, the recent shooters even uphold Columbine as a model they were emulating.

However, also within the last few months, the release of Darrell Scott’s second book upholds the call to another chain reaction that his daughter Rachel envisioned within that same time period. *Chain Reaction*, the name of the book and the name of the movement which it is inspiring, is a call for all of us to reach out in compassion to those we can each see around us.

If what I saw a few nights ago is any indication, it is a compelling vision that each of us can help to forward, if we will but focus on seeing the needs around us and be open to the call to serve them.

I don’t think there is no great revelation in Rachel Scott’s discovery. Compassionate ministry is a mission we can find *all* around us. What we are prodded to recall by her demonstration is that we must intentionally look for needs around us that might otherwise go quietly unnoticed.

What makes Rachel Scott’s story all the more compelling is the demonstration that we may have only a short time to work at our given missions—and that we may never really know the reach that our work and efforts may have one day.

Whose life will you impact today? And how?

I only hope that in each of our lives we could make just some of the difference that even only the remnants of Rachel Joy Scott’s life now make in others.

- Ron Ross

1 - “A Note to Rachel Scott,” Roger Rosenblatt’s commentary, originally found on page 102 of the May 10, 1999 issue of *Time*, can also be seen in its entirety at [www.racheljoyscott.com](http://www.racheljoyscott.com).

2 - “Noon in the Garden of Good and Evil,” a commentary by Nancy Gibbs, is found on page 54 of the May 17, 1999 issue of *Time*.

*Darrell Scott speaking at an outdoor youth rally and signing a cross at a memorial service held for all of the Columbine victims*

