

September 21, 2001

Dear Bethany,

Where do I start? You lie in a hospital 1000 miles away, fighting for your life. I'm here at my computer in the middle of the night trying to grasp what I feel. This will either be a letter you read as you recover a few weeks from now, or it will be a letter I read as I wrestle with the loss of my friend.

As I cried with your father on the phone this afternoon, the memories came rushing back. Trapped in the snow in North Carolina with Russ, Kelly, and Jared. Standing on the edge of the world in Machu Pichu, Peru. The long ride to your house. The long emails. The long talks. The fun of Cornerstone videos downtown and skits at the Edge. Seeing you lead worship. Seeing you lead younger girls to Christ. Seeing you stand for Him, even when it meant standing alone. The last goodbye on a sunny Friday morning.

I love you, Bethany. I'm not really allowed to say that to students as a youth pastor. But it's still the truth. As my dear younger sister in Christ, I love you. My heart aches at the thought of not seeing you again. I plead with God for a miracle...give her life. "I have," He says. Then the tears come, flooding my eyes with peace, joy, sadness, all rolled into one. Oh daughter of the King of kings, how majestically beautiful you are as you lie in the arms of your beloved Savior. "To live is Christ, to die is gain." Who would know that more than you do right now? Does the Lord minister to you while you are in a drug-induced coma? Wake up and tell me. What am I supposed to want for you? Heaven or to be poured out for Him in life? I miss you. I miss you so much.

While you've slept, your father has been courageous amidst his tears, your mother has been steady in peace, and your brother has been a broken warrior. Their world has stopped for you. You have no idea yet how astounding that is. The world has changed forever while you fought for your life. Remember how you were going to give your life away on the mission field? Well we need girls like you more than ever. So why doesn't God glorify Himself through healing you? Who am I to ask that? God has already been glorified through you. And He will be whatever the outcome.

So is this goodbye? It feels like it. But there are no final goodbyes in the family of God, right? You are in God's hands. There is no safer place. Believe that, dear sister. There is no safer than the hands of God. You will be okay, whatever the outcome. But I do want to laugh with you again. I want to see you do that stupid soccer dance that Lauren could never get right. I hope and pray it's in a few weeks around your pool. You owe me that, remember? You stood me up in July..... But if not, then we'll laugh and dance again in the presence of our Savior.

"Hold me, Jesus, cause I'm shaking like a leaf. You have been my King of glory. Won't you be my Prince of Peace?"

Your Brother in Christ, Todd