

## Grace Notes: growing our faith through music by Coni Ferland

### God is in This Story Jeff Pardo/Ethan Hulse/Katy Nichole

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If you'd like to hear the song: <https://youtu.be/ryD3D9X2myk>

There's torn up pages in this book, words that tell me I'm no good,  
chapters that defined me for so long.

But the hands of grace and endless love, dusted off and picked me up,  
told my heart that hope is never gone.

Refrain:

God is in this story God is in the details;

even in the broken parts He holds my heart, He never fails.

When I'm at my weakest, I will trust in Jesus;

always in my highs and lows, the One who goes before me. God is in this story.

So if the storm you're walking through feels like it's too much and you  
wonder if He even cares at all.

Well, hold on tight to what you know, He promised He won't let you go.

Your song of healing's written in His scars.

Refrain

If it reads like addiction, if it reads like disease,

He's the One who frees the prisoner, He's the healer of all things.

If it reads like depression, if it reads broken home,

He's the One who holds your sorrow, He won't leave you alone.

Refrain

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This is not a "typical" Christmas song, but what greater proof is there that God *is* in our story than the fact that Jesus was born? Born to bring us back into relationship with God. And what better time than Advent to look at, and celebrate, how Jesus comes to us again and again to remind us that "hope is never gone."

If you have the ability, take the time to listen to the song three to four times, if not read the words over three to four times. Let the words and the pictures they paint for you soak into your mind. Sit with the words and the pictures. Feel their power. Listen for the message God has for you this Advent. It may be a single word, a phrase, a verse, or the entire song. It may be a memory the song evokes, a picture it paints in your mind, a feeling. Note that message down, and carry it with you as you move toward Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Emmanuel – God with us.

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Psalm 3:2-3 *“So many say that God will never help me. But Lord you are my shield, my glory, and my only hope. You alone can lift my head, now bowed in shame.”* The Living Bible<sup>1</sup>

Psalm 143:7-10 *“Hurry with your answer, GOD! I’m nearly at the end of my rope. Don’t turn away; don’t ignore me! That would be certain death. If you wake me each morning with the sound of your loving voice, I’ll go to sleep each night trusting in you. Point out the road I must travel; I’m all ears, all eyes before you. Save me from my enemies, GOD - you’re my only hope! Teach me how to live to please you, because you’re my God. Lead me by your blessed Spirit into cleared and level pastureland.”* The Message<sup>2</sup>

God is in this story God is in the details;  
even in the broken parts He holds my heart, He never fails.  
When I’m at my weakest, I will trust in Jesus;  
always in my highs and lows, the One who goes before me. God is in this story.

2 Timothy 2:13 *“Even when we are too weak to have any faith left, he remains faithful to us and will help us, for he cannot disown us who are part of himself, and he will always carry out his promises to us.”* The Living Bible<sup>1</sup>

Ephesians 3:16-19 *“I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.”* New Living Translation<sup>3</sup>

So if the storm you’re walking through feels like it’s too much and you wonder if He even cares at all.  
Well, hold on tight to what you know, He promised He won’t let you go.  
Your song of healing’s written in His scars.

Jeremiah 29:11 God told Jeremiah: *“I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out – plans to take you care of you, not abandon you; plans to give you the future you hope for.”* The Message<sup>2</sup>

1 Peter 2:21-25 *“This is the kind of life you’ve been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. He suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it, step-by-step. He never did one thing wrong, not once said anything amiss. They called him every name in the book and he said nothing back. He suffered in silence, content to let God set things right. He used his servant body to carry our sins to the Cross so we could be rid of sin, free to live the right way. His wounds became your healing. You were lost sheep with no idea who you were or where you were going. Now you’re named and kept for good by the Shepherd of your souls.”* The Message<sup>2</sup>

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Psalm 34:17-18a *"Is anyone crying for help? God is listening, ready to rescue you. If your heart is broken, you'll find God right there."*  
The Message<sup>2</sup>

Romans 8:2-3 *"For the power of the life-giving Spirit – and the power is mine through Christ Jesus – has freed me from the vicious circle of sin and death. We aren't saved from sin's grasp by knowing the commandments of God because we can't and don't keep them, but God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours – except that ours are sinful – and destroyed sin's control over us by giving himself as a sacrifice for our sins."*  
The Living Bible<sup>1</sup>

Can you relate to this song? Feeling held by your past? Being freed by "the hands of grace and endless love"? That's why Jesus was born, to free the people of Israel, and all of us who follow in the footsteps of His believers. This is what we celebrate each Christmas, what we prepare for in these days of Advent – opening our hearts and minds to the arrival of that helpless baby in *our* lives. Describe how you can relate to this song.

Can you see God in the broken parts of your life? What does that look like for you? How does it make you feel?

Do you have trouble seeing God in the broken parts of your life? You are not alone. The power of Advent is in the opportunity it offers us to look for God. God knows that when we struggle, when we are broken, we need a Savior who knows struggle, who knows brokenness. It doesn't matter the cause of our brokenness, Jesus understands. Jesus has walked the same path, and "He promised He won't let you go... He won't leave you alone." Because of Jesus, never need to walk this path alone.

Paul reminded the followers in Corinth of this very thing when he said: "God comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us." (2 Corinthians 1:4 The Message<sup>2</sup>) Jesus was born to address just such issues. Jesus came to earth to come alongside us in our struggles and reassure us that we do not walk this path alone, that God's love is there for us every step of the way. And then, as Paul says, we are offered the opportunity to strengthen our connection with God through Jesus, by sharing that connection, that faith, with someone else who is struggling. How does this make you feel?

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If you have trouble seeing God in the broken parts of your life, look for the helpers (as Mr Rogers used to say). Look for those who reached out to you and offered comfort, support, connection. Those are the ones God is using today to help us connect with Jesus in our world. Those are the ones coming alongside us, just as Jesus came alongside them. Even if they seem few and far between, they are there. And perhaps, there are many more than you first realized, if you will just take the time to look for them. It's easy to see, and remember, the big things, but we too often overlook the simple gestures, and so feel that we're alone in our struggles. Spend some time reflecting on those times in your life when you struggled and look for those people who reached out to you. It can be a smile, a kind word, or a gentle touch on a difficult day. These simple gestures connect us to each other and to Jesus - our Emmanuel. Still finding it difficult to see God in your story? Bring your struggles to the manger, and lay them down. Open your hands to release your struggles and free your hands to reach out to that tiny helpless infant. Pick Him up, it's ok. Hold Him close, look deep into His eyes. They're the eyes of love and compassion. They know you; they believe in you, they trust you. As you leave the manger, bring the baby Jesus with you - He came here to be with you. Take that baby with you into your new year, spend time with Him, nurture Him and your relationship with Him. Because God is in your story.

*“But may all who look for You discover true joy and happiness in You;  
May those who cherish how You save them always say, ‘O Eternal  
One, You are great and are first in our hearts.’ Meanwhile, I am  
empty and need so much, but I know the Lord is thinking of me.  
You are my help; only You can save me...”*

Psalm 40:16-17a The Voice

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