

A 17-Year-Old's Last Words

Her last words touch the soul. And they cause the inward depths of our being to be searched about life, its purpose and meaning.

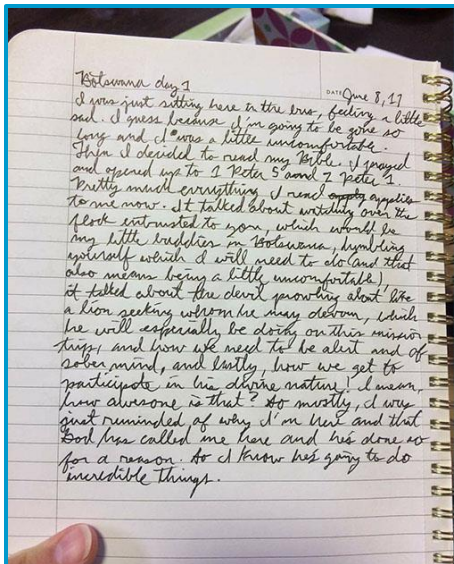
Sarah Harmening, 17, was killed in a church bus wreck this past Thursday afternoon as she and other young people and adults from Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama, were heading to the airport in Atlanta to board a plane bound for Africa to do mission work.

Several others on the bus were taken to the hospital, but their injuries are not believed to be life-threatening.



Police said the church bus driver tried to change lanes when he hit a car. As a result, the bus driver steered left, lost control, the bus entered the median, rolled over, and collided with another car.

As she rode in the bus, Sarah wrote in her final journal entry of the great things she hoped God would do through her youth group when they arrived in Africa:



I was just sitting here on the bus feeling a little sad. I guess because I'm going to be gone so long and I was a little uncomfortable. Then I decided to read my Bible. I prayed and opened up to 1 Peter 5 and 2 Peter 1. Pretty much everything I read applies to me now.

It talked about watching over the flock entrusted to you, which would be my little buddies in Botswana. Humbling yourself, which I will need to do also (and that also means being a little uncomfortable). It talked about the devil prowling about like a lion seeking to whom he may devour, which he will especially be doing on this mission trip, and how we need to be alert and of a sober mind.

And lastly how we get to participate in His divine nature! I mean, how awesome is that? So mostly, I was reminded of why I am here and why God has called me here ... So I know He's going to do incredible things.

(more)

And in a text to her sister, Katelyn, Sarah said: *This is such a great reminder. We are like a wisp of smoke. We are only here for a moment and this is not about us, life is not about us, it's about God who is eternal. So, I want to dedicate the one moment I am here, completely and entirely to Him.*

Some short time after she wrote those words, Sarah's path was redirected from Botswana to heaven.

Sarah's mother spoke to reporters during a press conference Thursday night. "Sarah was a gift to us that was given on Dec. 20, 1999. And she loved the Lord with a love that was tangible," Karen Harmening said.

What does this incident and, in particular, Karen's message, say to us?

- Life, no matter the age, can end at any time, without advance notice.
- When my turn comes, will my heart be focused on the really important things – like a passion for God and a love for others – as was the case with Sarah?
- And while Sarah's visit to her "little buddies" would have brought them comfort and hope, her final handwritten message is stirring thousands of others to consider their own relationship with God.

And that is no small accomplishment for a 17-year-old whose life – on this earth – ended suddenly. Her life in eternity has just begun.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter

P.S. Sheila Murphy is the daughter of Tina Ray, director of compliance in Life Care's Compliance Department. Sheila and her family are members of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Huntsville. She reported that the services at the church this past Sunday were "very overwhelming" emotionally.