

Publisher's Note

I Am His Daughter is the fictional story of a father and a daughter, along with the rest of the family, on a spiritual journey. The father, Richard Waters, did not grow up in a Biblical church setting, but he desired to know and obey God's will and to teach and lead his family in the ways of God. We follow this family's story through the eyes of Rachel, who adored her dad.

Seeing the evils of the world and the worldliness in popular churches, Richard often felt compelled to keep searching for something better. When he disagreed with a church position, he led his family elsewhere. Not once, not twice, but time after time.

This book shows how difficult the journey can be for courageous, zealous seekers, not only in coming to truth, but in deciding how to apply it without the counsel and support of extended family or church. Coupled with that is the difficulty of children adjusting as their parents' convictions develop.

With frequent moves and few long-term relationships, the Waters family missed important aspects of the Christian life. Though they

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were protected from the world and had strong family ties, they were missing brotherhood, accountability, and submission to a local church.

In this process, the children struggled. When they were young, the more difficult adjustments were leaving their friends and settling into new communities. As they became teens, they had more questions and began to wonder if their father was right. Even when they disagreed, they still respected their father.

As the older children grew into their teens and twenties, Richard found it hard to let his children go, to let them make decisions for themselves. He drifted from being a godly authority figure toward becoming authoritarian, frustrating his children.

In the middle of this was Rachel, now in her twenties and still loyal to her father. She struggled to know how to respond. Authority and submission are Biblical precepts. Honoring parents is right. Honoring God is right too. She had thoughts and longings about her own life and future. Rachel and her siblings found themselves in a confusing and very difficult situation.

What is the right way for a young adult to respond to a father who still treats her like a child and manages her life? What is the balance between strong, wise leadership and overprotective, authoritarian parenting that stifles development and discourages children?

In these difficult situations, answers are not easy to find or follow. But the heavenly Father promises to guide, protect, and help His children who seek and follow His ways. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

We pray that this story will bless and strengthen godly families in an ungodly world.

Prologue

I held up the little purple dress and then laid it across my lap. It was worn, ready to throw away, but I couldn't make myself part with it. I had been wearing that dress when Dad first announced that we were moving . . . more than twenty years ago.

For me, the moment was still etched in black and white—and purple.

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I was a pigtailed girl of five, with two older brothers and two younger sisters. I liked our big house in Minneapolis with its half an acre of lawn and tall trees, liked it as much as a little girl can who has never lived anywhere else. We had room enough for a dog and two cats, and I loved these animals more than the place, maybe more than some of my family. Not more than Mom, who still sometimes rocked me to sleep at night. Not more than Dad, the big man with brown eyes who everyone said I looked like. Not more than Mike, my oldest brother, or Kate, the sister just younger than me. But maybe more than Meredith, the busy toddler who so often got into my things. And certainly more than Jonathan, my six-year-old brother, who teased me endlessly and had started his first-grade books while I needed to wait until next fall.

I also loved pretty dresses. Mom sewed me a new purple one, and I stood beside her, fascinated, while she added the white ruffle on the bottom and white ribbon rosettes on the sleeves. I felt like a princess in that dress.

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The first Sunday I wore it to church, Dad made his announcement while we ate lunch at home. He had just dished potatoes onto Kate's plate and taken a long drink of water. Setting his cup firmly on the polished surface of the table, he said, "We're going to move in a month or two."

"We're going to move?" Mike repeated blankly.

Jonathan, the lover of adventure, cheered. "Where are we going?"

"We're moving to Utah," Dad answered.

"Where's Utah?" Kate chirped in her clear, high voice.

Mike said slowly, "Utah is far away."

Dad laughed his warm, melting laugh, and because Dad laughed, I did too. "What did you think, son? That we were just moving across town?"

Mike looked puzzled. "Why are we moving?"

"Because there are people in Utah who need Jesus."

We understood when Dad said that. We knew that helping lost souls find salvation was very important to him. When Mom tucked us into bed at night and gave us two kisses, one from her and one for Dad if he wasn't there, she often said, "He would be here if he wasn't telling lost souls about Jesus."

"What about the people here in Minneapolis?" Jonathan wondered.

"Other Christians here can tell them about Jesus," Dad answered. "But in Utah, there are so few Christians. Most of the people are Mormons."

"What's a Mormon?" I asked.

Dad touched my hand. "Mormons are people who believe another man's teachings instead of Jesus' teachings, Rachel. That is sad. Don't you think you'd like to move out there so that some of them can learn about Jesus?"

I nodded.

Over the next few weeks, in the upstairs bedroom that served as a schoolroom, geography lessons centered around Utah. Although

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I wasn't in school yet, I spent time there too, especially after lunch when Kate and Meredith were napping, and I listened eagerly to facts about Utah, learning that it was a desert and that it had mountains. But *mountains* and *deserts* were simply words and pictures in a book.

One other family from our church made plans to move as well—the Jason Lemaster family. They had only sons, the oldest eighteen, the youngest my age. I knew I would need to leave my friends at church, Gwen and Marissa, but that was okay. What was not okay was that we were leaving our dog and two cats behind.

Mike told me that news, and I stared at him in disbelief. Then I flared, “That’s not true!”

“It is. I heard Dad say it.”

I burst into stormy tears, and Mike tried to explain. “We can’t put them into the moving truck, Rachel. There’s no other way to take them.”

“I’ll carry them in the van with me.”

“Two cats and a dog!”

“At least one of them. We can’t leave them all behind, Mike. We can’t!”

He shrugged. I ran to the backyard and called for my pets, Ginger the dog and Patches and Peter the cats. Mom found me there, still crying, at suppertime. Just as Mike had done, she tried to explain to me why we could not take them along. But not until Dad held me and talked with me could I agree that it was okay to give my pets to my friends instead of moving them all the way to Utah.

“I want to give Peter and Patches to Gwen and Marissa,” I told Dad between hiccups.

Dad smiled down at me and rubbed my back. “That’s a good idea, my big girl. And maybe Mike or Jonathan can give Ginger to one of their friends. We’ll see if we can find new pets for you in Utah.”

I snuggled up to his chest, my head feeling funny after all the tears, but my heart a little calmer now and happy to be close to Dad.

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He patted my back with his big hand and looked at me thoughtfully.

“You know, Rachel, I think you’re a lot like me.”

“How am I like you?”

“You care very much about the things that are important to you. Right now it’s your pets. Perhaps someday it will be other people. I pray that when you grow up, you can help me in my ministry.”

“You mean telling people about Jesus?”

“Yes.”

I forgot about Peter and Patches and Ginger then. “How long do I have to wait?”

“Well, let’s get out to Utah first, and maybe then I can find something for a five-year-old to do.”

The next evening, Jason Lemaster and his wife Abigail came over to discuss the move. They brought their two youngest boys along, and Mike and Jonathan turned off the lights upstairs and started a game of hide-and-seek. Kate and I played for a few rounds. Then I crept halfway down the stairs and sat in the shadows, listening to the grown-ups talk.

Mom had made hot tea, and they all sat in the living room, holding china cups in their hands and sipping their tea.

“But, Jason,” Dad was saying, “we’re going to Utah to stay. I know you believe that God is calling us there.”

“Yes, I do. But how do we know how long He’ll want us there?”

“Judy and I feel like we’re not committing ourselves the whole way if we don’t get rid of our stuff here, even if we don’t know that.”

“Yes . . .” Jason said slowly. “I see your point. I feel as strongly about this move as you do, Richard.” He took a long swallow of tea. “Maybe Abigail and I haven’t committed ourselves like we should have.”

“Shall we pray about it now?” Dad suggested.

From my spot on the steps, I listened to both men praying, asking God to guide the move and to give them wisdom and courage for the Utah work. Although I was only five, I felt the reverence and the

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burden in the room. Dad had said I could help him when I got a little older, and I really wanted to be part of what I felt happening downstairs.

After the prayer was over, I tiptoed the rest of the way downstairs and went to Mom. She let me sit beside her on the sofa and put her arm around me. "Can I have some tea?" I whispered.

She handed me her cup. Holding the delicate china in both hands, I drank the rest of the dark red liquid. It was sweet and good, luke-warm by now, but satisfying. Then I stayed and listened to them talk.

Eventually Dad and Jason agreed to have a big sale to get rid of the things they could not move to Utah, and they hired an auctioneer. The Lemasters brought the things they wanted to sell to our place. Our garage was almost full with their stuff.

At the end of that chilly October day after the sale, much of the furniture was loaded onto other people's trucks and hauled away down the street. That night Mom tucked us into bed on the floor, and Dad sat down with the receipts from the sale at one end of the kitchen table instead of at the splendid oak rolltop desk.

After Mom had gone back downstairs, leaving our bedroom doors open, Jonathan called across the hall, "Did you know that we're going to have to sleep on the floor all the time in Utah?"

"I don't care," I murmured, cuddling close to Kate. Her warm breath tickled the hair on my forehead.

"I don't care either," he answered.

"I hope our new house has a nice lawn and is out in the country," Mike added.

We talked about the countryside we had seen the times we had left Minneapolis to visit relatives or go camping. But I was too tired to try to picture it. I fell asleep with my hand under Kate's pillow and her legs pulled up close to mine.