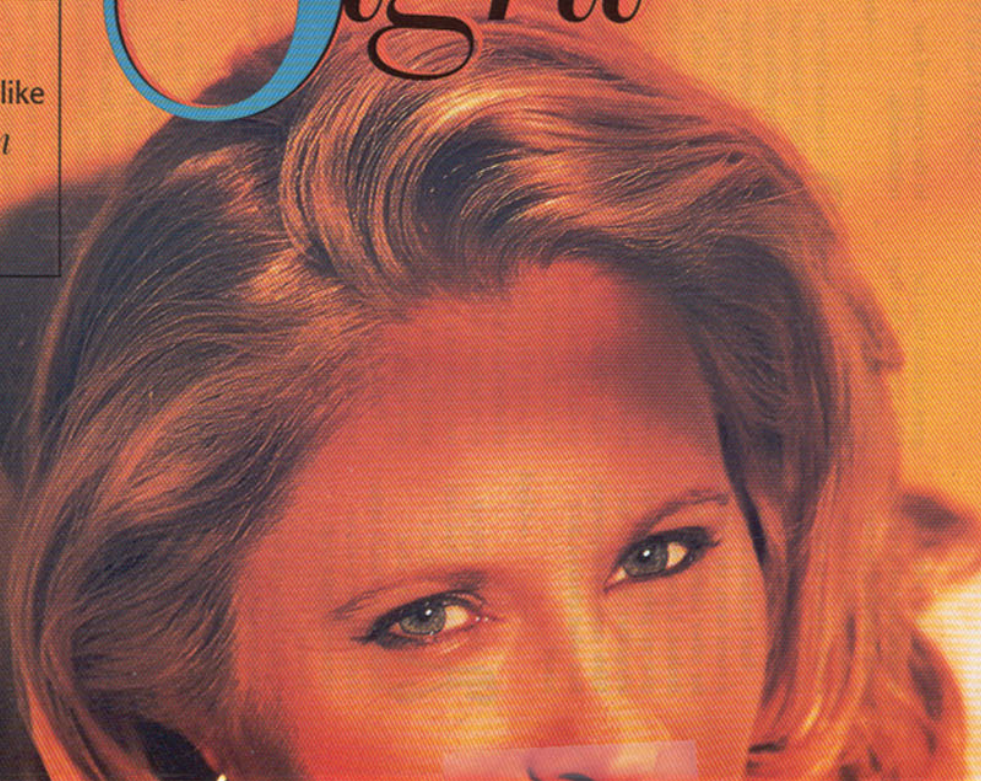


Precious *in* Hi Sight

Lisa Bevill *talks*
about her *struggle* to like
herself and her *passion*
to *help* others *find*
their worth in *God*.

AN
INTERVIEW
BY LISA
PROCTOR

You'd think a woman with Lisa Bevill's resume would be the last to struggle with feelings of insecurity or loneliness. After reading about her three bold and honest pop albums (including the brand new *Love of Heaven*); numerous commercial jingles for Wrigley's Gum, Toyota, Domino's Pizza, etc.; background vocal credits on



projects by artists like Michael W. Smith and Carman; as well as a home, marriage, and two boys—you might think Lisa's life has been easy.

In reality, two words Lisa was forced to become acquainted with early in her life are loss and grief. At the age of twelve, Lisa was told that her mother was dying of cancer. After a 13-year battle with the disease, three weeks after Lisa's wedding day, her mom died. Her father also suffered from rheumatoid arthritis for many years, dying in his daughter's arms when she was 19.

Lisa definitely felt the sting of sadness, loneliness, and insecurity in her life. And those feelings led her to some wrong decisions. But today, these experiences have given her a deep compassion for teens who have similar struggles. That compassion was the motivation behind her founding an annual summer camp called "A Place in the Sun," especially for teenage girls.

So pick a bunk bed and join us on a sunny summer day in Bowling Green, Kentucky, as Lisa takes a break from her camp schedule to share her thoughts about feelings of low self-esteem and what we can do about them.

TQ: When did you first get the idea to start this camp?

Lisa: I would get these letters [from girls struggling with what I had], and I would just sit on my couch weeping because it brought back a lot of things. I still remember what it feels like to be that age.

Every day my husband would bring me letter after letter. I would let him read a couple of them, and he would just say, "What is it with you women? Why do you hate yourselves so much? Why is weight always such an issue?" I said, "You'll never understand, because a lot of times we don't even understand."

I saw that there was a constant theme of self-hatred running through all the letters. All the girls pretty much said the exact same thing: feelings of suicide, depression, low self-esteem, no self-confidence, dealing with sexual pressures. And they wanted answers.



'Satan IS swinging his tail so hard, and he is trying to take you down. Get off your butt and pray.'

So I did a form letter, front and back, addressing all the issues. And I tried to make it as conversational and personal as possible. But one night I was sitting at my computer, and I was just like, *this isn't cutting it*. Some of them had written eight-to-ten-page letters, front and back. And if you were blind, you could read them by rubbing your hands over the paper because they wrote so hard. It felt like Braille.

I heard the Lord speak to me, "You need to start a girl's camp." And I was like, "No flippin' way. I'm too busy. I'm a wife. I'm a mother. I cannot do this." I felt really overwhelmed.

Soon after that, I asked CCM TV if I could just put a little blurb on the air to see if girls even wanted to come [to a camp]. Well, the letters started pouring in, and here we are. God totally took it out of my hands. It's not my camp anymore. It's totally His because it really was His dream, and I was just a vessel.

TQ: You mentioned the feelings of self-hatred many girls expressed in their letters to you. Can you explain this?

Lisa: The whole underlying key under all this low self-esteem, self-hatred, anorexia, bulimia, bingeing, purging—every bit of it is based on spiritual warfare. There is a battle going on for these girls' souls, especially if they are young Christian girls who have given their lives to Christ. Satan knows that he can't have their souls. He's already lost them. But, if he can make their lives miserable and talk them into committing suicide or talk them into ways to self-destruct, then they will not be effective.

I walked through many years of self-hatred, low self-esteem, and no self-confidence. The key is spiritual warfare. No one clued me in until I was 27 years old. By reading the book, *This Present Darkness*, I realized that there had been a battle all along for my life. It made me so mad. I was so determined to never let anything like what I went

through ever happen to another girl as long as I lived.

TQ: Do you feel you can relate to the feelings of emptiness many teens are feeling today?

Lisa: Oh, yes. I think we've all thought, *I'm alone and no one else is going through this but me. I'm weird. I'm different. No one else feels exactly the same way.*

TQ: With everything going on when you were younger, do you feel like you ever had a chance to just be a teenager?

Lisa: No. Except I am now, because I act goofy and I act stupid. It's fun. I like acting like a kid. All I remember is being sad. I was always sad and always alone. I don't really remember being happy until way after my mom died. Actually about 5 years ago, when the light went on about spiritual warfare, the light *really* went on. I realized I had been robbed, and I started to find the joy again.

TQ: Do you think the relationship you had with your father affected your esteem?

Lisa: I knew that my dad loved me, because he was always saying how proud he was of me and all that. But there wasn't a lot of hugging and holding and sitting on Daddy's lap—at least not that I remember. I think it was just because he was always in pain, he was always very sick.

That had a lot to do with the boyfriends I chose and the trouble I got into sexually. There is such an important role that fathers have. If dads would just realize and cling to their little girls. Hold them, love them, kiss on them, because they just have to have it.

If [girls] don't get it, they'll go to boys looking for it. And the boys will misunderstand, thinking that the girls want sex. All they really want is just to be held and loved and cherished—like a little girl.

TQ: What are some practical ways teens could improve their own feelings of self-worth?

Lisa: First of all, pray. Hit your knees and pray. Second of all, get connected. You can't just sit there and wallow in it and have self-pity. Get off your rear end, call pastors, get into some share groups, get into some Christian counseling, get into a center that deals with specific issues you are dealing with.

You have to actively pursue Christ and other people that will keep you accountable with what you are dealing with and stay in your face. We are ultimately responsible for the choices we make.

TQ: If there's one message you'd like for teens to take to heart, what would it be?

Lisa: Get off your butt and you pray. You pray against the battle. There is a war on for your soul. Satan is swinging his tail so hard, and he is trying to take down our youth.

Our youth have to wake up. Satan's not a fairy tale. It's not a movie; it's not a horror flick. It's real. If they're prepared for that, it will filter down into the self-esteem, into the sexual pressure, into this and that. That is the central key—to pray and realize you're in a serious battle. You better have your armor on. You better have your sword strong.

As some of the campers start to file into the lodge following an afternoon swim, we begin to wrap up our conversation. Lisa mentions that one of the songs on the new album will be dedicated to all the girls that have written letters to her or attended the camp. The song is "Tender Reed," and this is what it says:

"The years leave their marks/Like wounds on the heart/An aching where once there was none/The bitter winds blow/So where does one go/To heal when the damage is done"

"Oh tender reed/Although you're so fragile/Tender reed/Although you've been bruised/The gentle hand that grew you from a seed/Will be the strength you need"

**From "Tender Reed" by Greta Garner-Hewitt, Julie Adams, and Scott Krippayne on Lisa Bevil's Love of Heaven, Sparrow, 1996.*

If you'd like to drop a note to Lisa or get more info about her camp, write to Box 210993, Nashville, TN 37221.



'I WAS determined to never let anything like what I went through happen to another girl as long as I lived.'

What I am Worth?

Three of the girls at Lisa's camp took some time to sit down and share their perspective on self-esteem. Here's what they said:

TQ: How would you define self-esteem?

Susan (18): The confidence you hold within yourself.

Casey (16): I would say it also includes how you think other people think about you.

Carla (15): Also how you feel about your body is a big factor.



Lisa Bevil and her campers.

TQ: Where does our esteem come from?

Susan: From what people say about you. If you're complemented all your life, I guess you can begin to believe that. A lot of it is also what the media tells you, what your friends tell you, and acceptance from your mom and dad—that's really important to me.

Casey: You could compare yourself to the world's standards and almost always fall short and have a low self-esteem, or you can get it from God's Word and know that we are God's children and can have a high self-esteem.

TQ: Do you think guys view their self-esteem in a different way than you do?

Casey: In general, I don't think their self-esteem fluctuates as much as ours does. We are made differently—girls are more emotional.

Carla: I think guys feel like they have to be strong. You've seen the guys at school, they say really hurtful things to one another—which would kill us—and they just laugh it off. I wish I could be like that.



Susan: But I always wonder how much they are covering up, how much they hold in. Do they go home and think, "Man, that really hurt?"

TQ: What can a person do to have a healthy self-esteem?

Susan: I think you have to be grounded in the Word. God is the only thing that is not going to fail you. It's just accepting His acceptance.

Casey: I think that Satan is out to give us low self-esteem, to make us feel like we are not worthy. We need to discipline our thoughts and be able to say, "Satan, I know that is you, and you are lying to me. I'm fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image, my frame is not hidden from Him and He knit me together in my mother's womb."

Carla: For me, sixth and seventh grade were the two hardest years of my life. I hated junior high! I was depressed and couldn't make any friends. And now things are going so much better. I feel like my esteem is where it should be. And it didn't take the right clothes or the hair. All it took was being a friend, and learning what others were about.

TQ: In the future, do you think your self-perception will be different?

Susan: Oh my goodness, I want it to be better. It is so hard to let go of things that I have felt for so long, and just say, "OK, God. It's in your control, and you are going to do it."

Casey: Yes, I do want a better self-image. The thing that gets me is the guys. I'm always concerned with what they are thinking or how I look and all that stuff. I want to give my heart exclusively to God, and He is going to be my strength and my confidence.



Lisa P. and friends.