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Growing Up with Harry Potter

“Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much.” The opening line to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* had me hooked as a young girl of eight years old. I had always been an avid reader, but the rate at which I devoured the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling was alarming. Over the course of ten years, I experienced excitement, love, laughter, and heartbreak at the hands of Harry Potter and his friends. Rowling managed to create a fantastic bit of writing that redefined my world as I knew it, helping me through middle school, and even pointing me towards Jesus Christ.

Characters grew, and I grew with them. Each one had something to which I could relate: Ron’s sense of humor, Harry’s passion and sense of right and wrong, and Hermione’s love for knowledge, to name a few. Elementary and middle school is a rather prolonged expanse of awkward years for most children. To have the Harry Potter series as a constant in my life throughout those years was something that was invaluable to me. Consistency was certainly lacking in my friendships throughout that period of time. My evenings were spent tackling homework and reading. I did not spend a lot of time with other people; I was really more of an introvert.

During the first two weeks of summer vacation every year, I reread the Harry Potter series in anticipation of the next book that would come out. When *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* was released, my mother walked in on me at five in the morning, clutching the novel to my chest, bawling my eyes out at something that had happened. The warped pages are tear- and

mascara-stained and partially illegible. My emotional attachment to the characters is immense, and losing any of them was akin to losing a member of my own family. Reading through it again now still brings just as much emotion as it did the very first time I stayed up with a flashlight under the covers, hidden away from reality. As I read, however, reality became more appealing.

My copies of the Harry Potter books are well worn and covered in my own annotations, questions, and commentary. In truth, I am proud of how much thought has gone into my readings and re-readings of the series. For instance, I realized just how alike Harry's life is to the life of Christ. As I see it, Jesus Christ and Harry Potter both entered the world to save it. They lived their parallel lives interfacing the ordinary with the extraordinary in order to defeat the darkness that threatens to destroy all of humanity. As a result of this incredible realization, I explored the books in a new light, and that helped me to discover more in my faith. Rowling has done what Christians everywhere strive to do: created a way to help people relate to the Gospel in everyday life. The Harry Potter series teaches lessons, tells stories, and creates characters with Biblical roots. Rowling has managed to bring the story of redemption into the hearts and minds of the masses. These books pointed me toward Christ when I needed it most. I knew I could rely on God rather than validating myself through shallow friendships, and from learning that, I changed from the introverted, nerdy girl into the outgoing and friendly woman I am today.

Seven books, 4100 pages, ten years, one amazing adventure. The Harry Potter series is so wonderfully relatable to everyday life, and specifically to my life. It has impacted the way I view friendships, religion, war, romantic relationships, authority, society, social conscience, justice, responsibility, and so much more. I strongly believe that I would not be the same person I am today had I not been exposed to this literature. There is a level of comfort that can be achieved

through escaping into another person's life, but it is even better when the need for that escape disappears. It has spurred me on toward greatness in a way that nothing else has.