

The Butterfly Song Story

The Little Song with Wings

“That new guy is really cute,” my girlfriend whispered. “Who is he?” Sarah and I glanced at the young man standing at the front of the church. “That’s Brian, he just moved here from Colorado,” I answered for the tenth time that day. It seemed all the single women were asking the *same* question. They were obviously excited about our church’s new worship leader. I was, too. Although it was many years ago, I can still picture the handsome young man, tall and lean, standing there with a guitar slung over his shoulder.

We first met at Bible study. He played the guitar and I prepared hot cinnamon rolls and drinks for coffee hour after the study. The wafting aroma of those freshly baked sweet rolls always made heads turn, but Brian seemed especially interested. I later discovered that cinnamon rolls hot out of the oven were his favorite. During our long conversations, his good looks and talent were charming, but I had never known a young man who loved God so intensely. I was impressed with his heart.

“Do you know,” Brian asked me one day, “how far butterflies can fly on their fragile wings?” Actually, I had never thought about that. “Do you know,” he continued, “that elephants can swim in deep water and use their trunks as snorkels?” I had definitely never thought about *that*. God had given Brian a gift to see things in a way that was funny, unique, and full of wonder. And it was contagious! Before long, I was also thanking the Lord for creating Monarch butterflies that can migrate 3,000 miles, and for

snorkeling elephants that can swim in deep water. Brian even had me thinking that a crocodile *smiles* when it opens its mouth and shows its big, abundant teeth. I couldn't believe it—I was *actually* thanking the Lord for a smiling crocodile.

As Brian and I became friends, I learned that he and his six sisters had grown up near the woods and, as a child, he spent hours exploring the fields, streams and meadows there. He said he found great joy in all the simple things God made—most especially the colorful butterfly, the robin's song, and yes, even the lowly worm. Of course, Brian called the little fellow a "wiggly worm." His love for animals great and small grew out there, out by the meadows and the streams. It was there that he said he felt closest to God.

One morning before Bible study, I found Brian playing his guitar. He said he was writing a new song for the children he was working with—the precious ones that had special challenges. "Please," I asked, "would you share the song with me?" That was many years ago, but I still can remember how my heart was filled with God's joy as Brian sang his new song. Immediately, I began humming and singing along. I couldn't stop laughing—the little song made me *happy!*

The Butterfly Song

by Brian M. Howard

If I were a butterfly,
I'd thank you, Lord, for giving me wings.
If I were a robin in a tree,
I'd thank you, Lord, that I could sing.
If I were a fish in the sea,
I'd wiggle my tail and I'd giggle with glee,
But I just thank you, Father, for making me, *me*.

For you gave me a heart and you gave me a smile,
You gave me Jesus, and you made me your child.
And I just thank you, Father, for making me, me.

If I were an elephant,
I'd thank you, Lord, by raising my trunk.
If I were a kangaroo,
You know I'd hop right up to you.
If I were an octopus,
I'd thank you, Lord, for my fine looks.
But I just thank you, Father, for making me, me.

If I were a wiggly worm,
I'd thank you, Lord, that I could squirm.
If I were a fuzzy, wuzzy bear,
I'd thank you, Lord, for my fuzzy, wuzzy hair.
If I were a crocodile,
I'd thank you, Lord, for my great smile.
But I just thank you, Father, for making me, me.

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Brian shared the song at church that day, and everyone, young and old, sang along in no time. Everyone was filled with the same enthusiasm, joy, and childlike wonder that I experienced. In fact, the song became a favorite at our church and we began to sing it regularly. Visitors started sharing it with their own congregations and soon—the song began to travel. We began to hear stories of it traveling all over the country, even the world.

Brian's little song had wings!

The Butterfly Song soon became one of the most popular songs in British schools and churches in Ireland and Scotland.

The song was translated for children in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Norway, and Sweden. It was sung in Russia and China before flying off to Australia, New Zealand, and South America. Missionaries used the song to teach children of all ages about the love of Jesus and to bring hope to the sick and needy in remote areas around the world.

One day at church, I met Lual (pronounced loo-all), a young man from Africa. He had arrived in America a few days before I met him, and he had never before seen any of the things we associate with modern convenience. He called himself one of the “lost boys” from Southern Sudan, and told me he had learned “The Butterfly Song” in the remote jungle, far away from civilization and long before he had ever seen running water or even a light switch. He had sung the little song with his fellow tribesmen, and it taught him about the love of God.

Over the years, letters and notes have been sent to my friend Brian by children, parents, and grandparents whose lives had been touched in extraordinary ways by singing *The Butterfly Song*. Joyful school children, as well as those who were blind or challenged by other physical disabilities, or those who had suffered child abuse—all were singing the chorus with its simple message of hope.

Numerous publishers recorded the song that earned my friend a certified Gold Record and inclusion on a recording that received a Dove nomination. Orphans in India sang the song on television, and it was broadcast on NBC news. Brian’s simple song is often sung at baptisms, graduations, and even funerals. In fact, the song has even been inscribed on a tombstone. *The Butterfly Song*, now a well-known children’s classic, continues to be recorded and published worldwide.

The song Brian wrote changed my life and taught me to have a childlike faith. I learned that if God gives us a gift, a talent, or special ability—we must share it. And no talent God gives is

small. Songwriting, encouraging, teaching, whatever it is—*share it*, because you just never know what the Lord might do to multiply your gift and then use it to help others.

It was God who gave Brian the meadows and streams, God who made the butterfly that inspired a song beloved the world over and, of course, God who sent Brian to me.

You see, God gave me more than a friendship with Brian. He's still my dearest friend, and I am happy to report that I have been baking him cinnamon rolls for more than 25 years. He is my husband. And I never stop thanking God that I was there with Brian years ago to see the birth of the little song with wings, *The Butterfly Song*.

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By Ruth Gordon Howard
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