

**Freestyle Note:** Kia ora whanau - use this space to write a message & let your loved one know why you thought they'd be interested in this article.

## Have you ever cried out to God in agony?

### Letter to God – By Linda Perry

Dear God  
I'm writing this letter to you  
'Cause I don't have a clue  
Can you help me?

I'm sitting here  
Simply trying to figure out  
What my life's all about  
Can you tell me?

I never wanted to be  
The person you see  
Can you tell me who I am?

I always wanted to die  
But you kept me here alive  
Can you tell me who I am?

I lie awake  
Conducting this symphony  
That you have gifted to me  
But I can't ever sleep

Don't be mad  
But I get weak inside  
And I start to fall apart  
'Cause I feel nothing

I never wanted to be  
Some kind of comic relief  
Please show me who I am

I've been tortured and scorned  
Since the day that I was born  
But I don't know who I am



Photos: Linda Perry

And I thank you man for everything  
Sorry I'm so frightened about all of it  
But I wish I could give you more  
And all the lights are shining down on me  
And I feel intimidated by it all

I never wanted to be  
The person you see  
But thank you  
Oh, God please tell me now  
Are you disappointed, are you proud?

Haven't I done everything, everything  
I'm so sorry I'm so weak  
And I've turned into a freak  
But I don't know anything, anything

I've lost all self-esteem  
By burying everything  
And I feel nothing, nothing  
Oh God please tell me now  
Oh God please tell me now  
'Cause I feel nothing

And dear God  
I'm writing this letter to you  
I am coming unglued  
Please help me

Songwriter: Linda Perry

# Listen up - It's okay not to be perfect because...that's how God made us

I've always been wary of the boxes that we're put into or that we put ourselves into. One area in my life that's caused me no end of pain in the past is my negative self-judgment and personal expectations around being a good Christian and in particular being a good Christian parent.

During the bulk of my adult life I really battled with alcohol and I can tell you that there's nothing holy in attending Church on a Sunday morning with a hangover and trying your best not to retch when the Priest offers you the communion wine!

Thing is I'd be sitting there in the congregation looking like any other mum, but I'd be watching the other parents with such an intense envy (yup another sin to add to the list!) because to me they were the 'real' Christian parents, unlike myself who was obviously a fake one. That passage from Galatians 5:21 would taunt me:

Envyings \*murders \* **drunkenness** \* revellings\* & such like... shall not inherit the kingdom of God. **Oh my**

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Envyings \*murders \* **drunkenness** \* revellings\* & such like... shall not inherit the kingdom of God. **Oh my!**

**& so**, there was I on most Sunday mornings, nursing a head-ache and feeling as out of place as Dorothy in the Land of Oz (oh my!).

The song that Linda Perry wrote called *Letter to God* really captures how I felt then. I think Linda's lyrics would resonate with a lot of people and especially us Opals because from my experience too many Opal people had traumatic lives prior to prison. In one verse she says:

**Don't be mad  
But I get weak inside  
And I start to fall apart  
'Cause I feel nothing**

That really hit the nail on the head – because I felt nothing. I was just so overwhelmed by all the shit that'd happened in my life that I felt nothing. I can tell you that feeling nothing is such a horrible way to live and plenty of times I drank in an attempt to feel something and then at other times I drank not to feel anything (literally to drown the bad memories).

I wish I could go back in time and reassure myself that I was doing okay both as a parent and a Christian instead of heaping guilt onto myself. What I really needed back then was help to deal with my past and my alcohol addiction. Instead I'd basically taken a bad situation and made it a thousand times worse for myself.

**I was already living in a self-made prison before I'd even first gone to prison.**

The truth is that God is our Father and he loves each of us unconditionally and I sure learnt this the hard way!

**I'm going to share with you something deeply personal that happened in my life, if for no other reason than to give you hope and renew your faith.**

From the age of 8-weeks old I was in foster care. As a child I didn't talk or communicate very well, and I expect I'd have appeared to have been a lonely child. But I wasn't lonely because I'd always had company. It's just that no one else could see who I talked to. When I was older and started going to Church, I was able to understand very quickly what they were

talking about and so I was able to give my companions names. I now had God and Jesus. So, for me God and Jesus have always been a part of my life, just as the very air that I breath.

Being raised in the welfare I got the opportunity to go to Churches of different denominations and I had foster siblings who practised different faiths. So, I learnt early to look beyond the trappings that we humans have added to faith under the title of traditions etc. I simply had a deep and honest love and respect for God. You see I know that what we do in this life does matter and that ultimately one day I will stand before God – But still, in spite of my unwavering belief in God I turned my back on Him.

One night my life changed traumatically. On this night my Pandora's box with all its poison had been ripped apart. I literally said to God something along the lines of this:

# Look what I've done for you - I've always tried my best and look what you let happen - Fuck you!

I can tell you that the years after I said this were hard because I'd left both God and society.



**It wasn't until many years later that I understood that when I left God, that He kept an even closer watch over me.**

I exposed myself to pain, hurt and death countless times and statistically I shouldn't be alive.

**It's a different world beyond rock-bottom - I know I've been there too many times to count.**

Darly Royan Paraha



The pain in my life during those years was indescribable. My body is still recovering to this day and there is barely an inch of me that does not have scarring.

Finally, I woke up in the psych ward at North Shore hospital. I can tell you that waking up in a psych ward is pretty-humbling.



When I was told that I'd set fire to my neighbours house my life literally flashed before my eyes. I saw everything that'd happened to me flash backwards until I was a tiny little girl. When I looked at my young-self I finally let go of the chains that I'd used to self-bind myself to all the abuse that happened to me as a child.

What happened over the next few years was truly a gift from God, I swear that I became the luckiest prisoner ever. The most amazing things happened to me in prison and without a doubt I know that it was all God's doing.

**All I want to leave you with is this. If you have lived or are living a life like I did - or like Linda Perry conveys in her song Letter to God, have faith that you're doing okay.**

God gave each one of us our own personal cross to bear (issues & problems) and one of our tasks in life is to tackle the negative parts of ourselves head-on and to keep trying to better ourselves as we journey toward God.

**Being in prison doesn't exempt you from this journey - Don't lose focus or hope because of the restrictions that this world has placed on you - Become the best you can be NOW for: God, yourself, your children, world peace and your eternal life.**

Take each day, just a day at a time and if you stuff up, dust your-self off and start again.

**Just relax into the truth that God's patience has no end.**



**& have faith that you will smile again**

Isaiah 41:10 Do Not Fear, For I Am With You; Do Not Be Dismayed, For I Am Your God. I Will Strengthen You And Help You; I Will Uphold You With My Righteous Right Hand.