

Sandy D. Pierce  
Eatonton, Georgia

Age: 12

Lord, We Are So Thankful

Lord, we are so thankful, as  
we kneel in humble prayer,  
For your answers and bless-  
ings, you have scattered  
everywhere.

Though sometimes we reject  
you, praise God you're still  
there.

Lord, we are so thankful, for  
your patience and forgive-  
ness,

For your almighty hand that  
shelters us and keeps us  
from the storms.

Lord we are so thankful, for  
your Son who died to set us  
free.

And that with Him we will  
reign eternally.



Maryann Lehr  
Monroe, Wisconsin

Age: 12

Missionaries

Missionaries are all over crea-  
tion,

Telling of God in every na-  
tion.

In the North, South, East and  
West,

Showing people which way is  
best.

So if in your conversation of  
God you tell,

You're a missionary as well.

# The Greatest Game



# Ever Played

The following short story was written in response to our WANTED: CREATIVE TEEN WRITERS article a few months ago. We appreciate all the responses we have been getting and hope that you will continue to share with us, and with many thousands of teens across this continent, what Christ is doing in your lives and churches.

**By Scott Hutcheson**

**Age 16**

**Peoria, Illinois**

Buzz!

The sound could hardly be heard over the roar of the crowd, but everyone knew what it meant. Rockford Baptist Academy was headed to Springfield for the state championship for Christian schools. They had just defeated Waukegan Christian 84 to 78.

The fans poured from the bleachers; the cheerleaders screamed hysterically, and Coach Larson was raised into the air by his players. Wild excitement filled the air.

But even in the midst of all this, two players stood out. Rick and Jeff were the main centers of attraction. They had combined for a total of 56 points in the game. The "stars" of the team, both were seniors and had played basketball together since grade school. They worked the ball smoothly together, almost as an entire two-man team.

Rick and Jeff waited at the gym until the crowd had gone. Then they decided to play a quick game of "horse." As they played, they discussed the game and the event coming up in Springfield.

"What did you think of the game?" asked Jeff.

"We didn't play our best. We sure can't beat Timothy Christian in the tournament playing that kind of ball," declared Rick.

"Well, we've got a few days to polish up before we go to Springfield," said Jeff, sinking a fast lay-up.

"We're going to need it," added Rick. "But we'd better get going, Jeff. We've still got school in the morning."

As they walked to the opposite end

of the gym, Rick turned and tossed one final ball at the hoop from mid-court. A beautiful shot, it sank with a gentle swish through the net. With happy grins on their faces, the two boys shook hands and walked out into the night.

The next day at school a powerful sense of excitement ran as an undercurrent to every activity. Plans were made for the trip to Springfield. The team would be gone overnight, so hotel reservations had to be made.

Practice that night was rough. They didn't work on any new plays, just sharpened up the old ones. In this game Rockford Baptist Academy was the underdog—and they knew it. Nevertheless, they were determined to leave Springfield as the new state champions. For the rest of the week, every night, the practice was just as tough. But the team worked all the harder knowing that they weren't the favorites to win. By that Thursday everyone was excited. They were just one day away from the big game.

\* \* \*

"Hi, Rick! I'll be by in about half an hour."

"Thanks for calling, Jeff, I'll be ready."

After Rick showered, he packed his gym bag as he tried to remember everything. After a quick breakfast, he heard the familiar honk of Jeff's Volkswagen.

"Good morning," Jeff greeted Rick cheerily as he got into the car.

Rick grunted a greeting as he threw his gym bag into the back seat and settled himself into the passenger seat. "I know today's the big game," Rick thought to himself, "but why is he so cheery at 5:00 in the morning?"

But his spirits rose rapidly as they neared the school and boarded the bus for the ride to Springfield. The trip was a long one. But this time, as if even the bus were willing them to win, there was no trouble with the engine, no blowouts or any other misfortune. And at least one of these things almost always accompanied the team on their road trips.

"Game time, thirty minutes," came the voice over the loudspeaker as the team from Rockford Baptist walked in the gym door.

After dressing for the game, Rockford came out and started their pre-game drills. First was the lay-up drill. Just as they started it, Timothy Christian came out to begin their warm-up drills.

Soon, though, the referees blew the whistle to start the game. After a short prayer, play began.

Rockford got the tip and scored quickly. Timothy rebounded the ball, the guard drove all the way down court and scored. Timothy put on a full court press. Rockford lost the ball in a bad pass and Timothy scored again. Once again Rockford had the ball—and lost it. This time on a call for traveling. Timothy scored again to make it 6-2 in their favor.

By halftime Rockford was down by 23 points. Things just wouldn't go their way. Everyone in the crowd was discouraged. The team could feel it even on the court. No one thought Rockford had a chance.

But, after the half, something happened. As soon as the second half began, the momentum changed. Bit by bit Rockford began cutting away the lead.

The fourth period set the pace for what was to come. Rockford was nine points down at the start of the period. But with some hard playing and just 19 seconds left to go in the game, they were ahead by one. The score stood at 95-94—Rockford. But Timothy Christian was in good shape. Their steady center had two foul shots coming. He missed the first, but made the second. The score was tied.

Rockford brought the ball down the court, but was unable to put one in. The buzzer sounded. Regulation play ended with the score tied 95-95. The fans went wild as the game went into overtime.

Both teams played carefully. They knew they had to. Almost everyone was in foul trouble. Each team scored six points. The game went into a second overtime.

Timothy jumped to a 109-108 lead. With 15 seconds to go Timothy still had the ball. It looked like Timothy Christian was home free . . . almost.

Rick stole the ball from the Timothy guard and hit Jeff with a pass fifteen feet from the basket. Jeff turned and shot.

Swish!

110-109—Rockford. Five seconds left.

Three seconds had ticked off the clock when one of the forwards for Timothy hit a driving, acrobatic, one-hander to give Timothy a 111-110 lead. One more second slipped off the clock.

It seemed the game was over. The fans poured onto the court. They went crazy in Springfield.

But one second remained to be played. The fans left the court. The players returned. Rockford had the ball. But it was the length of the court from their basket.

If they called a time out, they would get the ball at mid-court. But they had no time outs left. And, if they called one anyway, Timothy would get a free throw on a technical foul.

Rockford took the chance. Timothy took the free throw—and missed! 111-110—Timothy!

From mid-court, with but one second remaining, Rick passed to Jeff. Twenty-five feet from the bucket Jeff put up a rainbow jumper and it was . . . .

The outcome of the game is of little importance. The lesson the team learned that night is. At the half it looked almost impossible for Rockford to even make the game competitive. But they did. They took Philippians 4:13 to heart. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

In spite of the fact that the odds were stacked against them, and no matter what the final score was, Rockford knew they'd won. They hadn't given up. They'd played their best and they'd given Timothy Christian the greatest game they'd ever played.