

Young singer finds strength and stability in Christ

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Jamie-Grace Harper's Grammy Award-nominated contemporary Christian song, "Hold Me," grows from her own experience of God's sustaining grace as she has struggled with Tourette syndrome.

At age 11, Harper was diagnosed with the neurological disorder characterized by uncontrollable sounds or movements.

"Symptoms started showing up when I was 9, and it was two years later that I received the official diagnosis," Harper said. "It was really frustrating and stressful, because I started making these weird movements and sounds that I couldn't control, and I dealt with a lot of bullying and torment from kids at school. When I got the diagnosis, in one way it was a relief to know what was going on. But it also left me with more questions and heartbreak, because there wasn't a cure or a medicine to fix it."

"Before being diagnosed with Tourette's, I was this outgoing kid who was passionate about her faith. After receiving the diagnosis, I spent almost two years in a slump. I never doubted that God was there, but I thought he didn't love me as much. I thought that my parents and sister must have loved the Lord more than I did, and in return, God must have loved them more than he loved me because they didn't have this problem. I had a lot of doubts and insecurities with my relationship with Christ and also with my self image."



However, an unexpected gift from her grandfather sparked a renewed joy and also helped relieve some of her symptoms.

"When I was 13 or 14, my grandfather gave my sister and me a drum set and guitar," Harper said. "Looking back, I think he was trying to bring us some hope and joy during this time. I don't think he had any idea that he was stirring up this passion in me to play music. I had been singing my whole life, but when I started playing these instruments, it took music to another level for me and also started helping my symptoms. During that same time, I was really impacted by Psalm 30:5, 'Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.'

"Between that verse and being involved with music, I was able to start coming out of my slump and began to understand that God still had a plan and purpose for my life. I realized that he wasn't going to let go of me—even though I was confused, stressed out and depressed. When I realized that he was still there and was still taking care of me, my outlook on life completely changed."

At age 19, Harper performs concerts across the country on the Revolve Tour, where she shares a message with teenage girls about finding strength and identity in Christ. In addition, she has established a nonprofit organization for teenagers with Tourette syndrome. As she describes her personal struggles, she desires to provide comfort and hope for others who are suffering from similar issues or illnesses. Harper has also created the Grace Talk conference, designed for local churches and focusing on topics relevant to teenage girls such as purity, relationships, parents and school.

[ISgr8SgCYbY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISgr8SgCYbY)

A few months ago, she released her debut album, *One Song at a Time*. While maintaining a busy speaking and performance schedule, Harper is majoring in child and youth development at Point University, formerly Atlanta Christian College.

Whether she is singing, speaking or working with young families, Harper desires to make an impact on lives with messages of hope and encouragement while sharing the gospel.

"I want to do everything I can to help other teenagers and to tell everyone I can about the joy of the Lord," Harper said. "I want to do whatever I can to share the love of God and to share that we all go through difficult things, but we are never alone. God is right there with us, and is never going to leave his children."