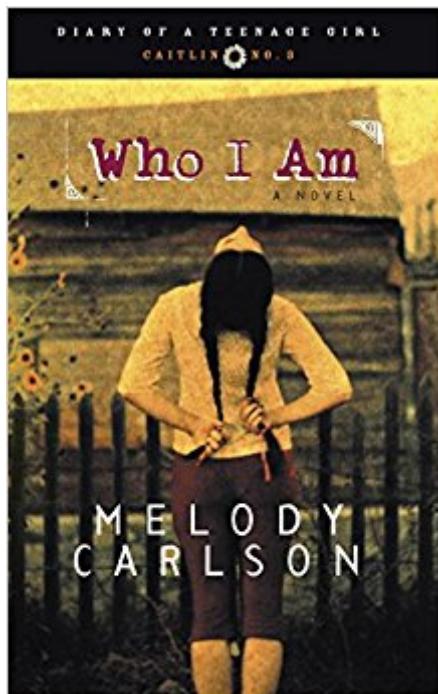


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Who I Am (Diary Of A Teenage Girl: Caitlin, Book 3)



Synopsis

It's challenging enough to be a normal high school senior -- but Caitlin O'Conner has a host of new difficulties to deal with in the third book of Melody Carlson's widely popular and fascinating teen series. Time is critical to help the orphans in Mexico, missions-minded Caitlin believes, but Mom and Dad are set on her attending college. Meanwhile, her relationship with Josh takes on a serious tone via e-mail -- threatening her commitment to "kiss dating goodbye." When Beanie begins dating an African-American, Caitlin's concern over dating seems to be misread as racism. One thing is obvious: God is at work through this dynamic girl in very real but puzzling ways. A soul-stretching time of racial reconciliation at school and within her church helps her discover God's will as never before.

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Melody Carlson is the bestselling author of more than seventy books for teens, women, and children with total sales over 1 million. She has two grown sons and enjoys an active lifestyle of hiking, skiing, and biking. She lives in the beautiful Oregon Cascade Mountains with her husband and Labrador retriever.

CHAPTER ONE
Tuesday (after the missions conference) It's a brand new year, and it seems

appropriate that I should begin a new diary today. And yet, to be perfectly honest, I donâ™t feel much like writing. I know that seems crazy since so much has happened in the last few daysâ™like I should be babbling on for pages and pages. But I guess Iâ™m feeling a little bummed right now or maybe just confused. And even that doesnâ™t make sense, because Iâ™ve had such an unbelievably awesome time here at Urbana. I mean, Iâ™ve heard and seen more about worldwide missions than Iâ™d ever imagined possible. And it almost blows your mind to see how many organizations exist! Still, that doesnâ™t exactly explain this weird mix of emotions Iâ™m having. To start with, I feel pretty small and insignificant at the moment (and I realize how self-centered that sounds). But itâ™s the truth, and I guess itâ™s because Iâ™m just one among thousands of young people who God might be calling to some sort of missions opportunity somewhere around the globe.Â I know it doesnâ™t make sense. (I should be glad that so many kids really want to serve God.) Maybe Iâ™m just tired and ready to go home. Or maybe Iâ™m feeling a little slighted that Josh Miller has been so obsessed with the conference that he acts as if I donâ™t even exist. Now howâ™s that for shallow? (On my part, I mean.) Not to mention painfully honest! Okay, I know, Iâ™ve made this big commitment not to date, and Iâ™m trying really hard to stick to it, but, sheesh, how does it make a girl feel when Â someone like Josh wonâ™t even give her the time of day? Wasnâ™t it just a year ago that Josh (my number-one hottee) was first getting interested in meâ™ little Miss Nobody? And look at us now. Itâ™s almost funny. And yetâ™s Thankfully, weâ™re about to hit the road! But before I sign off on New Yearâ™s Day sounding so gloomy, I must admit I do feel somewhat hopeful too. And I did get the chance to talk with several missions groups who focus on helping the most impoverished children, kind of like the kids at the dump in Mexico. As it turns out (sad as it seems) children who live at garbage dumps arenâ™t all that uncommon (especially in Latin America). And so, I gathered up all these brochures and e-mail addresses and stuff, and Iâ™ll be communicating with the missions groups for more information and advice (not to mention praying that God will lead me!). And that all seems pretty worthwhile.Â And if it wasnâ™t for that, Iâ™d probably be feeling pretty discouraged right now. There were times when I actually wondered why Iâ™d come to this conference. Because almost every missions person I spoke with kept saying, âœYou need to go to college before you seriously consider going to work in Mexico or anywhere else.âœ • One oldguy practically read me the riot act; he said it was âœinexperienced people like me that gave missionaries a bad name,âœ thank you very much! Well, let me tell you, that really made my day.Â Still, one nice woman suggested I might invest my summer vacation down in Mexico and continue my college studies throughout the rest of the year. That was a little encouraging. But for the most part, I just sat there in the stands, a face in the crowd, looking out

upon all these thousands of kids (most of them partway or even finished with college). And the embarrassing truth is I now feel like this teeny, tiny droplet in a great, big ocean. And I wonder what possible difference little old me can have on anything? But then again, Iâ™m probably just tired, and I do have a cold thatâ™s making me feel kinda down too. So, I suppose itâ™s times like this that I need to remember myverse about trusting God with all my heart.Â I must admit, Iâ™m looking forward to seeing Josh and the other guys during our trip back home. Naturally, they stayed in one of the menâ™s dorms. (I was in the womenâ™s.) And like I said Josh mostly ignored meâ™ okay, he completely ignored me. But I suppose that was a good thing. It did allow me to focus my attention on missions without being distracted by his great Matt Damon good looks, although I did notice a few other girls looking as well as what appeared to me to be flirting! Okay, okay, Iâ™m not jealous. Well, not exactly. I think Iâ™m mostly just tired and need to go home. Man, I canâ™t wait to sleep in my own bed!Â Thursday, January 3 (after a grueling trip)Sheesh, I thought weâ™d never get home. A nasty snowstorm blew up shortly after we took off, and we had to go painfully slow and be careful. We took turns driving around the clock for two and a half days. Thankfully, Josh had a cell phone so we remained in touch with our families. But everyone got so tired and grumpy that I was afraid we might slide right off the road and get stuck in a snowdrift and end up just like the Donner party! Well, I doubt we actually wouldâ™ve turned into cannibals, but we mightâ™ve killed each other off. Suffice it to say, I am quite glad to see the old homestead again. And it makes me wonder just how serious I really am about going down to Mexico to live. I mean, thatâ™s a long ways from home. Something to think about, I guess. But maybe Iâ™ll think about it tomorrowâ™after Iâ™ve slept for about, say, nineteen or twenty hours! By the way, I donâ™t think Josh and I exchanged more than a few sentences the entire time. Oh, well, I guess I should be thankful.Â Friday, January 4 (back to the norm, whatever that is)Even though I was kind of exhausted, it was something of a relief to be back at school today and back around kids my own age, who are just doing ordinary things like complaining about the basketball teamâ™s latest losing streak or soggy french fries in the cafeteria. Although, at the same time, it did seem slightly odd that no one here talked about saving the lost or feeding the hungry or getting Bibles to some third world tribe. And I suppose it all seems just a mite shallow in contrast to where I was only a week ago. But naturally I kept these thoughts to myself.Â At least my best friends Jenny and Beanie seemed really glad to see me. And I think they were actually relieved to hear that I wasnâ™t planning on dropping out of school my senior year and hitchhiking down to Mexico to save the world or something equally absurd. I wouldnâ™t be surprised if they both thought I was about to go off the deep end and do something totally weird and fanatical.Â But speaking of weird, hereâ™s whatâ™s got me

scratching my head today. It seems that Beanie has this new à céromatic interestâ • in her life (Joel Johnson). And this has got me a little concerned. Not so much because I thought she and Zach Streeter would ever get back together or anything, because I know theyâ ™re only à cœ just friendsâ • now, and Josh even told me that Zach probably has a girlfriend at college. (Although I donâ ™t think Beanie knows thisâ "or maybe she does!) But the thing is, itâ ™s been only about six months since Beanie promised God she would abstain from sex, and I suppose I sort of thought that meant she wasnâ ™t going to date either. And she hasnâ ™t. Well, until now, that is. And, of course, itâ ™s her lifeâ "and itâ ™s her decisionâ "and I have absolutely no right to judge her. But, sheesh, this guy isnâ ™t even a Christian. And quite frankly I just donâ ™t get it!Â Jenny told me that Beanie had been talking about Joel a lot last semester (and lâ ™m wondering where was I?), and she said she wasnâ ™t a bit surprised when they finally went outâ "to a movie on New Yearâ ™s Eve, as it turns out. But then, how could Jenny understand my concerns about Beanie? I mean, Jenny still thinks itâ ™s okay to dateÂ and stuff. lâ ™m not even sure where she stands on the abstinence issue. And she and Trent Ziegler have been going out since before Christmas, and heâ ™s not a Christian either. But itâ ™s really none of my business, right? So why should any of it even surprise or bother me?Â Maybe itâ ™s just that lâ ™m feeling a little like the odd man out right now. You know that old fifth wheel thing. Or maybe lâ ™m just afraid that weâ ™re all going to grow apart or that Beanie and Jenny might stop taking God seriously. Already it seems like those two are living in their own little world. I mean, they live together and work together and the fact is, I feel kind of out of it just now. So how can I possibly step in and say that lâ ™m all worried about their spiritual conditions without sounding like a total nerd? I mean, it seems like I should be able to tell my two best friends how I feel, but lâ ™m not so sure. What if they see me as some kind of religious fanatic? (Am I a fanatic?)Â Oh, maybe lâ ™m just overreacting to what is simply normal high school behavior. To be perfectly honest, I feel pretty confused right now and lâ ™m thinking I better just pray about all this stuff and try really hard to keep my big mouth shut before lâ ™m really sorry. (Now, wouldnâ ™t that be a good exercise in self-control!)Â DEAR GOD, PLEASE HELP ME NOT TO COME DOWN ON MY FRIENDS (OR ANYONE ELSE FOR THAT MATTER). AND HELP ME NOT TO LET THEIR CHOICES INFLUENCE MY DECISIONS. I KNOW HOW YOUâ ™VE ASKED ME TO LIVE AND I DONâ ™T WANT TO COMPROMISE. I WANT TO STAY STRONG FOR YOU. AMEN.

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