



Gracie's Way

Isaiah 43:19 ...I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.



Sisterhood of the Name Brand Pants

By Sharon Hawkins

"But, Mom, what would my friends say? Why would you think that I would ever wear that brand of jeans? I would die of embarrassment!!

said Gracie as she stood in shock of her Mom's latest gift for her, obviously a clearance rack purchase from the local department store, (not even from the mall, unbelievable!!!!).

She knew that things had been a little tight lately for her family, but "really!!", a girl had certain standards she had to uphold. Her reputation depended on it.

She was willing to cut back on certain things like snacks and soda, but her wardrobe? No.....Way.....! She'd rather wear the same pair of jeans every day of the week than settle. Her friends wouldn't even be seen with her in those jeans...it was laughable, except Gracie wasn't laughing!

Her Mom's expression went from glad to sad in 3.2 seconds. Grace had had the best intentions, and the pants were a 'steal' after all—definitely two reasons that these pants were worth fighting for! She decided to give it one more shot. First, she'd appeal to Gracie's common sense, then if that didn't work, she'd play

the old "shame her unmercifully" card that is a favorite of every mother and that had worked for her a time or two in the past.

"But, honey, they look just like your favorite jeans that you just outgrew. What's the big deal about a name brand?"

Strike one...Gracie didn't buy it. What she heard her Mom say was "Why are you being so unreasonable? Don't you have any common sense?"

Gracie flung back, "No, they don't look like them at all and do me a favor don't try to shop for me! I'm not four any more!" Grace didn't even get to Strike two. She decided to quit while she was behind.

"Ok," Mom said, "tell me why it's so important to you." Gracie began, "Well, there are certain groups of girls at school and the girls in the group I hang out with dress a certain way. Other groups of girls might dress a different way, but alike. They're kinda like different sisterhoods. I'm comfortable with my friends and that's just the way it is about the clothes! I have to look like I belong to my group."

Mom replied, "Oh, it's starting to come back to me now. Let me blow the dust off my mem-

ory. When I was in school we had the nerds, the preppies, and the jocks." "That's right, Mom, it's kinda like that but I think it's even more divided now. I guess it's just really important for me to try to fit where I feel like I belong."

"Well, if it's that important to you, we'll take the jeans back and go to the mall tomorrow. It's not like they don't have clearance racks there too and you know me, I can smell a deal a mile away." "Yes, Mom, BELIEVE ME, I KNOW! And I'll try to like the ones on sale. Deal?" "Deal!", Mom hugged her baby and tried to remember how it felt to be a teenage girl who was trying to find her way. She decided this battle was best left 'un-fought. Gracie had done a fairly good job of picking the right friends. Besides, she'd love to spend the day with her daughter and, it would definitely take ALL day!!!

"Just promise me that you'll think about one thing, Gracie," said Mom. "I want you to remember that sometimes it's better to be a single eagle, than to be one of many hens cooped up in a hen house. When the time comes, don't forget...God gave you wings, trust Him to help you fly."

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Special points of interest:

- Watch for our Grace In The Wilderness Teen Girl Conference in October 2010.
- We're on Facebook. Become a fan of the Grace In The Wilderness Page. Look us up...

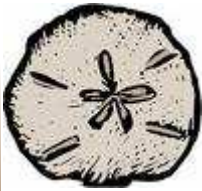


Isaiah 40:31

But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles...



By Marie Pritchett



The Sand Dollar

For many years now, my husband (Joel) has searched for the perfect sand dollar. Anytime we are near a beach he will sneak away determined that this will be the time he will find a whole sand dollar, not just a piece of one. Several summers ago my children (Josh & Ali) and I even plotted to buy a sand dollar and place it so that Joel would surely find it but somehow that felt like we would be cheating him out of a great discovery. So the search continues....

This past year we spent Christmas visiting Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. A lot of people ask why we would want to go to the beach when it is cold but we love it. We bundle up in sweatshirts and walk the nearly deserted beach with only a few others who dare to brave the cold wind. I love spending the early mornings wrapped up in a blanket on the balcony sipping a hot cup of coffee filled with sugar-free French vanilla creamer, reading my Bible, and enjoying the beauty that God has created.

Joel is not an early riser when we are on vacation. He likes to lie in bed and channel surf between all the sports channels before

he gets up. As for Ali, we are lucky if we see her before lunch. So the mornings are for me and God. I love that time of day. I pray the usual prayers thanking God for my family, our health, our friends, etc. The tears begin to flow. I pray that God will comfort our hearts as holidays are bittersweet since the death of our son, Josh. One morning as I cried, the Lord's sweet voice reminded me of the sand dollar. Our lives are like the broken pieces. In the sea of life, we may get tossed around, stepped on or pushed to the side. The heartaches and pain of this world have created flaws, cracks and even missing pieces in our lives and yet God loves us anyway. He loves us in spite of our flaws. Sometimes it is hard to understand how anyone could love us with all our imperfections but God loves us, "cracks" and all.

My tears of sorrow were quickly replaced with tears of joy as I think of the day when God will remove our flaws, repair the cracks and replace the missing pieces. We will be made perfect and whole, just like that little sand dollar.

I hope that one day Joel will find the treasure that he longs for. In the meantime, we will be able to tell people the story of the sand dollar and how Jesus can reveal

himself through us, cracks and all. "...they will feast on the abundance of the seas, on the treasures hidden in the sand." Deuteronomy 33:19

The Legend of the Sand Dollar

*There's a lovely little legend
That I would like to tell,
Of the birth and death of Jesus
Found in this lowly shell.*

*If you examine closely
You'll see that you find here,
Four nail holes and a fifth one
Made by a Roman's spear.*

*On one side the Easter Lily,
Its center is the star,
That appeared unto the shepherds
And led them from afar.*

*The Christmas Poinsettia
Etched on the other side,
Reminds us of His birthday
Our happy Christmastide.*

*Now break the center open
And here you will release,
The five white doves awaiting
To spread Good Will and Peace.*

*This simple little symbol
Christ left for you and me,
To help us spread His Gospel
Through all Eternity.*

—Anonymous

By Brenda Horne



Facing the Giants...

For our first "Facing the Giants" segment, we asked a panel of teenage girls the following question: "Is it okay to date someone just for fun when you know you could never see that person as a possible husband for you one day?"

We thank the ladies for being open and honest with their answers. Here are the responses:

Dating is a controversial topic in the first place. If you know this young man is not a Christian, you shouldn't consider dating him at all. I agree that if you could never see yourself marrying the guy then why waste your time dating him, ya know? It would be hard to stay pure if you're dating for fun. Samantha

I think it is ok to date someone if they are like your best friend but God will send you your husband. You will know it when He does. Laney

I think that if you aren't even thinking about marrying that person someday, then why date them.....!! Heather

Personally, I don't think that it's right. I've always been taught that if you couldn't see that boy as a husband there was really no reason to be dating him. Dating is something that should always be taken seriously because you never know when you might meet the "Mr. Right" God has sent for you! Anonymous

In my opinion, when you are young you don't think about who you are going to marry. But I think you would date a person, maybe, you could see yourself with.

But I think you wouldn't have to worry about it because God will provide you a person that He's been working on just like He is working on you. Madison

I think it is ok to date someone for fun as long as they aren't a bad influence on you. You need to date people to see what kind of guy you would want as a husband one day. Brett

I think that it is ok maybe to get to know somebody and maybe build new friendships. But in my opinion, it would save you heartache and time if you don't date someone you know you won't make it with. Haley

I don't think you should date a guy if you don't think of him as husband material. But also guys mature as they grow older;

Facing the Giants..con't

so you could later think of him as husband material, the longer you date him. If a guy treats you terrible and does bad things, obviously, he won't be good husband material. You want a guy that loves you, cares about you, respects you and also includes God as a major part in his life. Guys are good husband material, I think, if they have all of those traits in them. Sydney

As you can see, there are many different views on the subject. So, whether you want to date in long, more serious relationships, or if you want to date in more casual, friendship-type relationships, that decision is one you have to make for yourself. Yet, in either situation, remember, there is always the chance of falling in love. That, after all, is the ultimate goal of dating.

Therefore, we must be careful with our

Therefore, we must be careful with our hearts. We, as ladies, think we can trust our hearts. We know our hearts' desires, and we trust our emotions. We have our warm, fuzzy feelings and we are going to use them!!

Well, here's what the Bible says about our warm, fuzzy, trust-worthy hearts: The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure; Who can understand it?, Jeremiah 17:9. That's right, the heart is DECEITFUL, more deceitful, than ALL ELSE! So much for our warm fuzzies, huh? Having plans, hopes and dreams are not wrong, we all long for that 'happily ever after', but truthfully, it just is not possible outside of Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 19:21, Many are the plans in a that prevails.

man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

1 Chronicles 28:9 says, And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.

So while you are dating, remember to keep your heart loyal to the Lord and look to Him for your 'happily ever after', then He will deliver your husband to you.

Psalms 37:4

Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

By Will Roach



A GUY'S POINT OF VIEW

A Guy's Point of View...

When looking for someone to date, you should look for someone who could also be your friend first. Being friends with someone can easily turn into a romantic relationship and you can never have too many friends.

Another important quality to look for in a person to date is someone who is a Christian. I am glad to say that I have a Christian girlfriend and I would recommend to

anyone that they date someone who is also a Christian. If you are already dating someone and you know they are not a Christian, then it could be a the perfect opportunity to tell them about Jesus.

One thing guys really like is when girls can just be themselves and have fun and laugh. When being yourself, you will be more comfortable around guys and it will show. Guys also love a girl who can make them laugh and laugh with them. Sometimes in relationships, you may feel pressure to change

something about who you are, but try not to compromise yourself just so someone will like you. Being yourself is the greatest thing you can be and I am positive that you will find the right guy who appreciates you for who you are.

Will Roach is 25, is a Christian and loves making a difference for the Lord in the lives of others. He is very involved in Kentucky Missions and will be going on his 14th Kentucky Mission trip this year.

By Chad Snipes

Life Is Short...

You're around your friends
And the pressure is building
But you're afraid
To tell them the good Lord is willing

To take their sins
And throw them away
Never to be seen again
Not tomorrow, not today.

Life is short.
You know its true.
Don't forget
What he did for you.

Just listen closely.
He's around the bend.
He will help you out in the end.

It's getting late
And you finally say
The Lord loves you
So come this way.

I'm happy now
To finally say
He's going to Heaven.
He chose the best way.

It starts off easy
Not much to do,
But talk to them.
Count one and two.

You think about it
But say "no" later.
Maybe that chance won't come
No, just maybe never.

Chad Snipes, 17, loves the Lord. He is an Easley High School student and attends Brushy Creek Baptist Church in Easley with his family.

How to be a BBS—BEST BIG SIS!

By Lynn Cowell

Do you have a little brother or sister that drives you crazy? Maybe they're going through that stage where even though they're eleven they talk like they're four? Are all of *their* questions pushing *your* buttons? "Can I borrow your straightener?" "Can I hang out with you and your friends?" "Will you give me a ride to my friend's house?"

Well, I have a confession to make: I was once the annoying little sister. In fact, I was the annoying little sister to six sisters and brothers! But you know what? They didn't make me feel like I was. In fact, I felt just the opposite.

My closest sister in age is Janet, who is five years older than me. When I was little, I wanted to be just like her; I thought she was so cool! Janet was on the cross country and track team at school. She got along great with my parents. She was a leader in our youth group. She had a cute Christian boyfriend. She didn't party or get into trouble and she was nice to me! What a great big sister!

I'm not sure if Janet was being intentional or not, but she had a huge influence in my life. She often gave me great advice, "Lynn, don't party; it's *not* worth it." "Save yourself for the man that you will marry one day; it *will be* worth it." Not only did Janet give great advice, she lived it out. She didn't tell me one thing and live another. In fact, I believe it is because of her example of getting married as a virgin that I was able to do the same! Janet's life made me want to copy her.

How about you? Are you aware that your

little sisters and brothers are watching you, listening to you, copying you? Whether you know it or not, they are and like Janet, you have the opportunity to influence them either for good or bad.

So what are some ways that you can be intentional about influencing your siblings for good?

1. Do a Bible study together. Pick out a study that is a great fit for the two of you (if you need some help, ask an adult you respect) and set aside an hour or so once a week to study God's word together. This one will produce great results for both of you!

2. If you have a little sister, take her shopping and help her to choose clothes that are modest. Just like you, your little sis is surrounded by those who have less than godly ideas of what looks terrific! Demonstrate to your sister that you can look great and glorify God too!

3. Recommend Christian music for her MP3 player. When I find a great band, I share it with my friends; they are always glad to hear about a great new group. Your sibling is the same. When you loading up your MP3, recommend it to your sibling too!

4. When your brother or sister is getting caught up in school drama, give a godly perspective. It probably wasn't too long ago that you were in the same boat. Help them to work out their relationship struggles, using God's word for advice.

5. Help your sibling become eternity minded. So many things in life really don't matter in light of eternity. When your brother or sister is having trouble at school or on the ball field, help them out by reminding them this stuff is only temporary!

6. Demonstrate for them how to respect your parents. They may have friends who don't honor their parents; be a positive example!

7. Recommend some great books you have read. Libraries and bookstores are loaded with all kinds of books; some good and some not! Point your sibling to books that are not only good, but good for them!

8. Encourage your brother or sister to get involved in a small group at church or Christian school club where they can grow in their faith. If you're close to the same age, ask them to come with you!

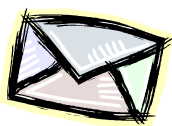
9. Take some time to do something with your brother and sister that *they* like to do. If they are younger than you, get on the floor and play Legos! If they are older, ask them what they would like to do and then carve out time just for them. You'll be demonstrating unselfishness!

10. Lastly, pray with your sibling. Nothing can be more powerful than to hear someone you look up to praying for you.

I hope this gives you some great ideas on how you can be a positive role model for your sibling. You never know, maybe one day your sibling will be writing an article about you!

Lynn Cowell writes from Charlotte, NC. She is partnered with Proverbs 31 Ministries and she writes and speaks to women and teen groups throughout the country. You can join her at www.HeIsThatIntoYou.com.

By Brenda Horne



Letter to My Teenage Self

When Sharon asked me, at first I had **NO** desire to write a letter to my teenage self. As a teenager, I was painfully shy and backwards. Being reminded of those awkward years did not sound fun and I really had no idea what I would tell myself anyway. So I prayed: "Lord, I don't know where to begin with this letter. Please help me!"

I explained my problem to my husband who has always had self-confidence. His response was - "Did you hear what you just said? You were shy and backwards. Maybe that's what you should write about." So that was the answer to my prayer, and here goes my letter. :)
.....

Hi Brenda,

How are you today? Are you still sitting in the back of the classroom trying not to be

noticed? I know you are painfully shy and you don't like having attention drawn to yourself. But I have some good news for you, guess what.....It's ok!! It's ok that you are shy!! It's ok that your heart jumps out of your chest every time the teacher calls your name to answer a question. It's ok that you don't quite know what to say when people talk to you. And just because other people

Letter to My Teenage Self...con't

like being the 'center of attention' doesn't mean you have to be like them. You can be the one that just sits in the back and watches those who don't mind the attention. Someone has to be the audience, right?! We are all different and unique in our own ways. There is nothing wrong with being reserved and quiet. We are all fearfully and wonderfully made. (*Psalms 139:14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.*)

So when the insecurities creep up on you and you feel as though you don't belong because you have nothing to say ... just sit back (*in the corner where you are comfortable*), relax (*take a deep breath, everything's ok*) and enjoy being the quiet one.....God loves the meek also. (*Psalms 37:11 But the meek shall inherit the earth;*

and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.)

I also know sometimes you have trouble making friends because you don't know what reaction you will get. You don't want people to mock you or reject you.

With that being said, stop and think. You believe in Jesus (*you have since you were 8 years old*). You know His story. So, don't you think Jesus faced the worse rejection of us all, therefore He should understand your fears completely? (*Luke 17:25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*) You have prayed to God for other things, so go to Him humbly with your fears. Don't forget He is on your side. He will gladly help you (*Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.*)

Everyone struggles with something and your struggle is shyness and rejection. You believe in the Lord, so now just trust in Him and have confidence in Him and all will be fine. (*Psalms 71:5 For You are my hope; O Lord GOD, {You are} my confidence from my youth.*)

Love, Brenda

After writing this letter, I looked back on my awkward teenage years, not with regret but with encouragement. I can see that the Lord never left my side. He carried me through those shy, backward years. Although I was bashful, I was still a believer in Him and the Lord did answer my prayers and blessed me. Now as an adult, I am reassured, the Lord did not leave me then, and He will not leave me now.



Mom and Me:

The Key to Having a Great Relationship with Your Mom

By Lynn Cowell

Do you think your parents feel comfortable (or would feel comfortable) if you shared things that are happening in your culture: music, media, attitudes, sex or drugs? Do they want to know? These were the questions I recently asked a group of high school students in a survey.

The answers varied. "Yes, they are comfortable, but I don't like talking to them about it. They want to know, but I don't like to talk a lot." "No, my parents aren't comfortable. I hope they don't want to know what is going on!" I was so happy when I read this one, "Yes, my mom feels comfortable. I talk to her about almost everything." I would venture to say, that girl has a great relationship with her mom!

What makes a great relationship with your mom and what part can you play in helping you and your mom to have one?

Let's first look at what doesn't work. I read an interview recently with a girl who was seventeen and it blew me away. She talked about how badly she wanted her parents to know what was going on in her life: who she was dating, how far they had gone, how he treated her and the mean

things he said to her. She didn't tell them though. She was afraid; afraid of how they would react.

As a mother, this crushed my heart. I want my kids to be able to tell me the things in life that they are struggling hard with. I want them to know that they are not alone. I want to be able to pray for them, love them and hold them when they need it. I can't do that for them like I would like to unless they are honest with me.

Honesty. That can be tough. Yet without it, how can someone support us when we need it? How can someone help us to avoid trouble if they don't know it's there?

I have two teen daughters that I have great relationships with. Although my relationship with each daughter looks different, there is one thing that is the same. Honesty.

In our history of relating together, my daughters and I have worked on being truthful; honest about good things and honest about the bad stuff too! Because they have been truthful, there is an underlying trust that runs through our relationship. Trust is like super glue; even when things get difficult and there are problems to

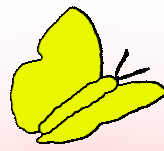
solve, knowing you can trust each other helps the relationship to stick together! Honesty is the protection shield in your relationship. Think of it like the password on your FaceBook. Honesty lets the other person in.

The Lord has given us moms to be these exact people; people who are safe to let in. People who can help us up when we fall. People who will love us even when we find it hard to love ourselves. People who believe in us.

Give your mom a try. Ask her not to freak out, to just listen to you. If you give her a chance, you may find her to be just the type of friend you need!

Some of you are not fortunate enough to have a mom you can lean on. Maybe your mom is not a believer or she is just unavailable. If you are one of those girls, perhaps there is another adult who's a Christian with whom you have a relationship and whom you can trust. If you don't know of anyone, pray and ask God to send you someone to be like a mom to you. I have two small groups for teen girls that I meet with. I really enjoy being an adult friend to these girls. I'm sure there is a friend out there for you too!

Ecclesiastes 4:10



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FOCUS SCRIPTURE VERSE:

Isaiah 43:19

...I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Grace In The Wilderness is an out-reach ministry for Today's Busy Woman. Our mission is to encourage women of all ages:

- To look upward to God as they discover Him in a new and deeper way,
- To look inward as they discover who they are in Christ, and
- To look outward as they discover God's plan for their lives.

We appreciate your prayers and support. Donations are also appreciated and may be made payable to Grace In The Wilderness Ministries (address to the left).

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By perseverance, the snail reached the ark. —Charles Spurgeon

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