

Gracie's Way

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



BFF

What is a best friend? It's that person that you share your secrets with, your heart's desires with, your belly giggles with. Someone you can let your hair down with, and tell all about it when you get fed up. Someone whose shoulder you can cry on and someone who is there for you day in and day out. You have history with your best friend.

Gracie and Tiffany had been friends their whole lives. Tiffany was one of Gracie's very best friends in the world. Lately, Tiffany had been hanging out some with another group of girls at school that weren't Gracie's friends and she had been feeling a little left out.

Then, today, all day long Gracie had been excitedly waiting for fourth period. Tiffany's fourth period class was right next door to Gracie's and she couldn't wait to see her. She was going to invite her for a sleepover. She hurried in to catch her before the bell. As she walked up behind Tiffany, she heard her telling one of the other girls, "I don't really like Gracie, I just hang out with her because our Moms are friends. Actually, she gets on my nerves!"

Gracie felt her breath catch, it was like someone had kicked her right in the stom-

ach. She stopped, turned and quickly left the room without ever letting Tiffany know she was even there. She fought back tears for the rest of the day. When she got home, she ran past her mom and nearly knocked her little brother down. She slammed her bedroom door, threw herself on her bed and buried her face in her pillow as she beat it with her fists and screamed to the top of her lungs...!!!

...What happens when you find out your best friend was not the person that you thought she was? What if you find out she doesn't feel about you the way you thought she did? There's not much that's worse than being betrayed by a best friend.

Well, Jesus knows how that feels! He was betrayed with a kiss by someone close to Him. Nothing hurts worse than when someone that you love and who claims to love you, betrays you.

Mark 14:10 says, "Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them." Jesus knew all along that Judas would contribute to His death, but the Lord still chose to give him life. He knew that Judas would place Him in the hands of His enemies, but Jesus still placed Judas right in the center of His 12 closest companions, His disciples.

Wow, He chose him...well, He

is God and I am not...that's all I can say. Being betrayed by someone so close to you, well, I certainly wouldn't choose that and I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

People are human, they're going to make mistakes and sometimes they are going to hurt us to our core. It's how we respond that speaks the loudest about us.

Can we forgive the unforgivable when they're not asking to be forgiven? Wow, that's a tough one... But, that's exactly what Jesus did!! He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." What a Savior!!! And He wants us to forgive others too. Colossians 3:13 says, "...Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

Another important lesson here is to choose our friends carefully. And, there's just no better friend than Jesus! He is that person that you can share your secrets with, your heart's desires with, your belly giggles with. Jesus is the one you can let your hair down with, and tell all about it when you get fed up. He's there for you day in and day out. And, He won't turn His back on you, ever! He's been a part of your history, and, even better, you can have an eternal future with Jesus.

And...He wants nothing more than to be your BFF!!!

By Sharon Hawkins

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Special points of interest:

- EMPOWERED JESUS GIRL, our Grace In The Wilderness Teen/College Age Girl Conference on October 16, 2010.
- We're on Facebook. Become a fan of the Grace In The Wilderness Page. Look us up...



Proverbs 18:24

A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.



Butterfly Kisses

By Marie Pritchett

*Sweet sixteen today...
She's looking like her
Mama, a little more
every day.*

*One part woman, the other part girl.
To perfume and makeup, from ribbons
and curls.*

*Trying her wings out in a great big world,
but I remember...*

*Butterfly kisses after bedtime prayer,
Sticking little white flowers all up in her
hair.*

*You know how much I love you Daddy,
but if you don't mind,
I'm only gonna kiss you on the cheek this
time.*

*With all that I've done wrong, I must of
done something right*

*To deserve her love every morning, and
butterfly kisses at night. Bob Carlisle*

Like most teenagers I could not wait until I was old enough to drive. Before getting my permit, my Mom used to let me drive around our neighborhood or in vacant parking lots. Moma had a beauty shop in our house so there were always lots of cars in our driveway. One day there were

several cars there and for some reason they needed to be moved. Of course, I was the first to jump up and volunteer. Reluctantly, Moma agreed and I bounced out the door. I got in the first car and when I started to back up, the gas pedal was a lot different from Moma's and the car flew backwards into a car that was parked on the road. I panicked and put the car in drive to pull up and hit the car in front of me. Everyone came running outside. I wasn't hurt but my pride certainly was. One of the cars I hit was Joel's (my boyfriend then). Not only was I upset that I had damaged 3 cars (that my parents would have to pay to repair) but I was sure that they would not ever let me have a car of my own.

A few months later (and many driving lessons later) the day I had waited for had arrived...my 16th birthday. My parents bought me a 1978 Vega. Now I know most of you don't even know what that is but, believe me, I was excited! Finally, I would be able to go anywhere I wanted, whenever I wanted or so I thought. It wasn't long before I realized that my parents had

other ideas about my new found freedom.

Like the little girl in the Butterfly Kisses Song, I wanted to grow up so fast. My parents had forgiven me but there were rules that I had to follow. You see we all make mistakes but we can be forgiven. God loves us and forgives us of our sins if we ask him. All our sins are buried in the depths of the sea never to be remembered or used against us. As we grow into mature Christians we will truly come to understand the depth of God's forgiveness and love.

Our forgiving Heavenly Father loves us unconditionally no matter what— even through our mistakes, our sins, and as we try out our wings.



Ephesians 4:32

***“And be kind to one another,
tenderhearted, forgiving one
another, even as God in Christ
forgave you.”***

By Brenda Horne



Facing the Giants...

*How should teenage girls
fight loneliness, especially
when all your friends have
boyfriends and you don't?*

Pray and ask a parent or grandparent.
-Savannah, 13

Enjoy the time spent with your family and Christian friends. Being in a youth group and enjoying time with them and with God can get you through anything.
-11th grade, 16

Pray and ask God to help you through it.
-Heather, 13

Boyfriends will not stop the feeling of loneliness for long because the hole that you are trying to fill cannot be filled by any boy. Going to the Bible and digging into the word always helps me, because God is always there even when you can't feel Him. -14

Read a book or do something creative.
-Diamond, 12

To help fight loneliness would be to lean on God and spend a lot of time in prayer.

Also maybe ask God for somebody like a good Christian boyfriend. Or spend time with friends and people in your church or youth group. -10 grade, 16

Pray to God and ask for help. -12

Find a hobby. Help out someone who needs it. Pray the Lord will guide you to someone who can help with your loneliness. -13

Pray about it, go to church and hang out with friends. -Cheyenne, 13

Loneliness strikes the heart of us all; it shows no preference to age: A 4-year old little girl sits in daycare, missing her Mommy; a 13-year old girl cries on her bed because another weekend approaches and no one seems to care that she is alone; an old, widow woman's heart aches from the loneliness her husband's death leaves.

We all feel lonely at times, but it is what we do with that emotion that matters. The responses from our teen panel tell us exactly how to break the bondage of loneliness.

First start with prayer, but stop praying

to that God that just floats out in the heavens who seems to have no time for you and start praying to Your Friend! Yes, Your Friend...Jesus is not only your Savior and the Master of the Universe but He is also Your Friend! John 15:15 says, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends..."

Second, we know for sure that Jesus is your friend, but are you His? He longs to help your loneliness, but any sin you cling to is a brick wall that He cannot pass through. You must first repent. Tell your friend, Jesus, about the sins that consume you and ask for His help and forgiveness. That's how He knows **you** are His friend, because you trust Him. With your trust, He **can and will** bust down that brick wall. *John 15:14 says, "You are my friends if you do what I command." (Which means, I know you are my friend because you love me enough to follow my commands. Those that do not love me, will not follow me.)*

Psalms 91:2 says, "I will say of the Lord

Facing the Giants..con't

"He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

And last, get active in your church. Go to Sunday School. Go to church. Join your

youth class. Talk to that older lady friend at church who is so kind to you. Give Jesus a chance to help your loneliness.



Cut Again! Rejection Doesn't Feel Any Better the Second Time Around!

Cut again! Looking at the board in the locker room, Kari was unable to believe she had failed to make the track team for the second year in a row! She had tried so hard and she was the only one of her friends to not make it. She had worked out in the off season, well, a little bit at least. "God, why? I tried my hardest, prayed, asked my mom and some friends to pray. I even posted a verse about courage on my FB page! Why did you let this happen *again*?"

There is nothing harder than rejection; nothing worse than feeling like we've failed. So if it hurts so bad, why does God let it happen?

Mariah asked this same question when she didn't make the basketball team in middle school. At 5'11", everyone said she'd make the team for sure! She thought so too. So when, after three grueling days of try outs, the coach took her aside and

told her the devastating news, she was completely shocked. "Everybody including myself expected me to make the team," says Mariah, now 16. "The worst thing is when people say things like 'This is for the best.'; but it really was true."

Not making the basketball team caused Mariah to ask herself some questions; tough questions. Was basketball her passion? If so, she needed to get busy and put some effort into some serious practicing. If not, what was?

Asking this question led Mariah to face it: basketball was not her passion, nor was it her gift. What she loved was music.

Mariah took the rejection and turned it into her reach. She began to reach toward the things she loved. She joined a prestigious choir that practiced at a higher level than most and traveled. She began voice lessons and piano too. She began to invest her time and effort into what she was gifted in.



Jesus Christ!

What held Him to the cross that day on Calvary? Nails? Yeah sure, but His passionate love for you and me.

What kept Him alive and so quiet like a precious lamb through it all? I believe He saw our faces. He loves us so much that He did this for us. He took a beating for us. He hung on the cross for us. And on that cross He said, "Forgive them Father for they know not what they do."

We don't realize that every time we do wrong, we beat Him and we re-hang Him. But this world is so messed up and blind. We don't realize what is truly wrong because nowadays right is wrong and wrong is right.

We beat Him everyday... and He still loves us. Is that not amazing? But why can't we just fear the Lord? Why can't we just obey and not punish Him? Let's not

punish Him for being the loving and caring Jesus Christ He is.

We're undeserving of His love when He is undeserving of our sinful way of living. No one, and I mean no one, is perfect! Everyone messes up. But just because you are born a sinner, doesn't mean you should fearlessly sin. Fear the Lord. Don't just sin knowing the Lord will forgive you. How could you just use the Lord like that? Those people that do so are heartless and selfish.

Doing right is difficult in these hard times. But we just rebel against this world and live for Him. Can't we suffer? Yes! His suffering was, is, and always will be the worst case of suffering ever.

Is it gonna kill us to give up that addiction, that alcohol, foul language, sex, popularity, or lust? Even though it's hard to give it up, it's possible. Everything is possible

2 Corinthians 6:14

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

By Lynn Cowell

So how has this new motivation turned out? Last summer, Mariah traveled to Italy and even sang in the Vatican. This year, she tried out in her school's exclusive chamber choir normally reserved for juniors and seniors, becoming the only sophomore to make the group. She followed her passion which led her to find her niche.

It hasn't been easy for Mariah. Following her gifting has demanded a need for new friends; all her old friends were athletes. But as she's making her way, she's discovering new teens who are crazy about music as she is!

Lynn Cowell is a part of Proverbs 31 Ministries and writes from her home in Charlotte, North Carolina. She loves hiking, peanut butter with chocolate and sushi. Read more of Lynn's writings at www.RadRevolution.org.

By Reid Long, 16

with God and with His strength that He can give you.

Miracles can happen. Sometimes we try to use our own so called "strength" to face struggles. Lean upon Him, trust in Him, He's got you right in the palm of His hands. It is a battle to try to believe in someone you can't see but you truly see Him everyday. You see Him through creation and life.

Be living proof. Let people see that God is real by letting Him live in you.

Romans 5:8

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The Interview: Kirbi and Donovan (PART 2)

By Brenda Horne

OH NO, I'M 17 AND I'M PREGNANT !

Meet Donovan and Kirbi Bliss, they are very active members of their church, Clearview Baptist. They have two beautiful little girls and they are happily married....but that was not always the case. In the beginning, Kirbi and Donovan's relationship was not an easy one, especially when she became pregnant at age 17. I had the privilege of interviewing Kirbi and Donovan about their relationship at that time and how difficult it was for them both. Here's Part 2 of that interview:

How did you feel about abortion before you got pregnant? **Kirby:** I didn't think about it really. **Donovan:** I thought abortion was wrong and still do. No child should have to lose their life over the bad decisions made by their parents.

What did you think about abortion after you became pregnant? **K:** After I got pregnant I knew that I could never have an abortion, even though we did not plan this baby I knew she was still a person and not just a choice I had to make. Yes, it's my body the baby was growing in but the baby is still a person and I could not abort her.

Did you think about giving the baby up for adoption? **K:** No, While I was pregnant, I knew I couldn't give my baby up. Yet after she was born I wondered if I had made the right decision. I wondered if she would have a better life if I had given her to a family who could give her more than I could. I did not know if I could give her the life she deserved. I was so young and scared and someone else may be a better mother to her and can take better care of her. **D:** No, although I think it's a very good decision for the young mother who can't take care of a child.

How do you feel now? **K:** I am glad I didn't give her up but it still isn't easy. I do think adoption is a great choice for young mothers who cannot take care of their babies. It just wasn't the right choice for me.

Do you think it would be harder on the mother or the father to give the baby up for adoption? **D:** It wouldn't be easy for either parent. But I do think its harder on the mother because she has carried this child for nine months and now she may never see it again. It's a tough decision.

Did suicide ever cross your mind? **K:** No,

I had a baby inside of me and did not want to hurt her or me. I did get depressed sometimes but never thought about suicide. There is a difference between being depressed and actually wanting to kill yourself. **D:** It crossed my mind on occasion, not because of the baby but because of everything else that was going on in my life. I was hooked on alcohol and other drugs and I felt like I was alone in the world. Sometimes I would sit and dwell on things in the past and things I knew were going to happen and I felt I couldn't take it.

What stopped you from committing suicide? **D:** When life would get bad I would drink a lot to try to forget or do other drugs. I would also try cutting myself as a way to hide the internal pain. Sometimes pain on the outside will overrule the pain on the inside.

Were you saved at the time you got pregnant? **K:** Yes, but I was not living for the Lord when I got pregnant. **D:** No, I was saved around 3 years later. My life is a lot different now than before I was saved. I have dropped all my drugs, and alcohol, no cursing, and only 1 woman in my life.

Do you think parents can say or do anything to help prevent teenagers from having sex? **K:** I think it is so important for parents to have a close relationship with their children. Moms need to be mothers not Best Friends with their daughters! Dads are very important role models also. I feel that girls look for husbands who have the same good characteristics as their fathers. **D:** I think parents should keep their kids in church and talk to them about sex and the consequences of their actions.

When you look back, do you think the Lord helped you during this time in your life? **K:** Absolutely!, As wrong as I was, He was always there. I prayed, prayed and prayed! I realized years later that I knew all about God but I did not have a relationship with Him. **D:** The Lord helped me in a major way. It took me hitting rock bottom before I saw the right path. I was so strung out on pot and alcohol that I couldn't eat unless I was high on pot. I would be at work and eat lunch but 30 minutes later I was throwing up. I couldn't keep food down unless I was high. The Lord showed me how messed up I was and helped me through the process of getting clean.

What do you think the Lord has taught

you through this experience? **K:** The same thing God keeps telling me over and over again. Give it ALL to Him! We all fall short of the glory of God but He died and arose for us ! No matter what the situation is, pregnancy, drugs, drinking, gossip...we all fall; yet God can pick us up and clean us off, if only we will open our hearts and ask Him to. **D:** He has taught me that even though I make mistakes, if I will trust in him, He will see me through.

What advice would you give young girls about getting pregnant now that you have gone through it? **K:** I say "Don't have sex at all !" Its not just about getting pregnant or getting an STD. It's that no matter how strong your morals are, once you start having sex, it is so hard to stop. The temptation is so much stronger after you have sex and it's easier to fall into the trap again and again. I don't feel teenagers are emotionally ready to have sex, I wasn't! Yet they think they are ready, and then once they fall, then they have no idea the heartaches and difficult situations they may have to face. There is a price to pay for everything.

As far as getting pregnant, it is extremely hard and once you are pregnant you can't take it back, even if you have an abortion or give the baby up for adoption, the fact is, you were still pregnant and you have to deal with the emotions that go along with being pregnant. The emotions don't just disappear because you had an abortion or gave the baby up for adoption.

Also, when you get pregnant so young, you have no choice but to grow up very fast, whether you want to or not.

D: For the ladies, I would advise really thinking about the consequences of having sex before marriage. The world tells us its ok to have sex and a lot of people in your schools are having sex, but we, as Christians, are called to be different. We are called to walk with Christ, to make a stand for what is right and fight against what we know is wrong. Its ok not to have sex ! Even if everyone else is having sex, it is often times better to do the opposite of the masses. Most people do not do what they know is right. The same goes for the guys. ...to be continued...



Letter to My Teenage Self

By Sharon Hawkins

Dear Teenage Self:

I know you don't know this right now but, believe it or not, you are okay just the way you are! That's right, you are actually not repulsive! First of all, you're not fat! And, I know you think you're so ugly! I look at your pictures now and think Wow...Really! God meant for girls to be soft not skin and bones, even though the world says the skinnier, the better, it's okay to eat...Really!

Boy, you just wait till age creeps up on you and see what having a baby will do to your body! Enjoy every day of your youth. Once it's gone, you can't get it back. One day, you'll be tired just from doing what you have to do every day! And as you get older, you'll work hard trying to look as good as you do now on a bad day, without makeup... Really!

And, you don't need a boy or friends or clothes to give you worth! Just the way

you are...God loves you! You are a precious princess, because your Father is the King of the Universe yet you walk around acting like you're nobody special with no self-esteem.

That guy you're dating, well, I hate to tell you, girl, but it ain't gonna work out! After years of pain, you're gonna find that out! You need to focus on what's really important in your life right now. You're missing out on a lot! You've kind of turned your back on some of your friends because this guy doesn't want you to have friends. Bad idea!!! You need to get your priorities straight.

And, what about your Mom? She wants to spend time with you. Would it really hurt you to spend some time shopping with her instead of making her rush back for your date? One day, too soon, she'll be gone and what you wouldn't give for one more shopping trip with her! In fact, you would

give just about anything for ten more minutes to be with her! Yes, her, I know you don't get along too well with her right now. But you're gonna find out one day, she was right about a whole lot of things that she's telling you and she's saying it because she loves you! You might want to listen...

Lastly, you need to be back in church! Even though you got saved at age 9, you need the influence of Christian friends to encourage you not to make mistakes that will affect you the rest of your life. Most importantly, God loves you and longs for you to spend more time with Him. Walking closely with Him is the only way to really be happy. He can guide you and help you with every day. In life, you don't always get what you want, you get what you choose. He can save you a lot of heartache...Believe me, I know...!!! Love, Sharon



God Is My Friend!

Is He yours? He will never let you down, or cancel plans for something better. He is patient, He is kind. He does not envy, He does not boast, He is not proud. He is not rude, He is not self-seeking. He

is not easily angered, He keeps no record of wrongs. God does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. (God is the truth.) He always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (for you!). God never fails...does any of this

By Samantha McCollum, 15

sound familiar to you? He will never lie or trick you! He ADORES you- Every inch of your beautiful head. You are his gorgeous creation. God made you unique. He is the greatest friend you could ever have.



Skittles

My youngest daughter likes walking on the treadmill. She does it right, she wears her work out clothes, puts on her tennis shoes, pulls her hair out of her face, grabs her Ipod and she is set.

Once on the treadmill, she starts out a little slow and works herself up to a fast, steady pace. This, in turn, gets her heart rate up and she is well on her way to a healthier body.

There's just one slight problem with my daughter's whole routine. While she's working her muscles, listening to her Ipod, and drinking her healthy mineral water she is also... eating a bag of Skittles!!

When I saw her, I laughed and suggested that maybe, just maybe "tasting the rainbow" while she exercises is not the best idea for her weight loss plan.

To my surprise she agreed, so the next day she put aside the Skittles, grabbed her Ipod, mineral water and a Pop Tart in-

stead!!

Isn't this typical of us? We go to church, sing the songs, pray the prayers and listen to the sermons. We do what it takes to get our hearts and minds spiritually healthy. Except for that one slight problem—that thing that we just can't let go of. It's just a small "sin" thing, it really doesn't matter; yet its nags us like a minor toothache.

We praise Jesus and worship His name in church, yet once away from church we munch away on those Skittles, like little uncaring, unconcerned, candy-starved children, continuing in the sin that we know is so wrong. Then, we wonder why God is not blessing us.

It's not easy to let go of something you enjoy, and yes, you do enjoy it or you wouldn't have a problem letting go. Sin is fun, exciting, exhilarating and... tasty, for a while anyway. Then when the excitement fades, and the pounds start adding up, we wonder what went wrong and we want to blame God.

By Brenda Horne

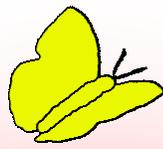
Sin is sin. No matter what form of "Skittles" you are holding on to, the Lord can help you with your sweet tooth. It's not easy; first you have to admit to Him that you know you have a problem and that *you* cannot fix it. Then allow Him to change your appetite for that sin. You may have to run past the candy aisle at Bi-Lo and you may have to 'pay at the pump' at Hot Spot so you can steer clear of the temptations in the convenience stores, but the Lord will help you, if only you will ask with your whole, humble heart.

Romans 12:2

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God.

Psalms 121:2

My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.



Grace In The Wilderness Ministries

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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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Watch for our
Grace In The
Wilderness Teen
Conference on
October 16, 2010,
at Blue Ridge View
Baptist Church,
Pickens, SC

Check us out at
www.WildernessGrace.org

Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape. —Anonymous

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