

Gracie's Way

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



Hide and Seek

By Sharon Hawkins

When Gracie was a toddler, she used to love to play hide and seek with her mom. When it was her turn to hide, she would run and climb onto the middle of the couch, cover her eyes with her hands and try her best to hold back the giggles. She thought that if she couldn't see her mother, then her mother could not see her.

Her mom would walk all around the couch calling her name, pretending not to see her, until Gracie couldn't contain herself any more and her giggles would explode. Mom would intensify the 'giggle fest' with a good old round of tickling. Ahhh, the good old days!

These days that trick would really come in handy. Oh, if she could only cover her eyes and disappear sometimes!

Like yesterday, when she raised her hand and asked the teacher a question and the cutest boy in the class turned to her and snapped, *in front of everybody*, "She just went over that!"

Or, last week, when she met the most popular girl in school coming down the hall and she told Gracie she had some food on her chin. Then, as she walked closer, she said sweetly, "Oh, honey, never mind, I see now, it's a zit! Bless your heart!"

Why is it that everybody thinks they can say whatever they want to you as long as they say,

"Bless your heart!?" "And... don't call me honey!... Especially when you're slamming my zits!! Aarrggghh!!"

Gracie often can't wait to get home to run to her hiding place. Over the years, her hiding place has changed—it's no longer the couch in the arms of her mom, now it's her room. It's where she can get away from it all. It makes her glad she's a girl. Her brothers have to share a room but, thankfully, she has her own and it's her safe haven, her hiding place.

She makes a 'bee line' to it some days as soon as she's home and she prays her mom isn't in the mood to play hide and seek and won't follow her down the hall.

Why does she want to hide? Pegine Echevarria, MSW, is a nationally recognized speaker and youth counselor specializing in issues facing teen girls and an advisor to the editors of *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*. She says, "Girls are struggling with media manipulation, uncertain moral standards, self-loathing arising from impossible standards of physical beauty, heavy peer pressure concerning sexuality and substance abuse, and a host of sobering academic and career dilemmas!" No wonder she wants to hide!!

No matter how hard she tries, she can't be beautiful enough, smart enough, popular enough

or strong enough to fix all that! Today's Busy Teen is under attack, like never before. And no matter how much her parents love her and are there for her, it's still hard...!!! It's the world she lives in today. What's a girl to do???

...Run to God...that's what!!

There is no hiding place like Him and He understands like nobody else can! Psalm 91:4 says that He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart!

Alone time can be good, especially if we're getting alone with God—on our knees or in His Word. Even Jesus needed His time alone. Many times in scripture, He left the people and went to get alone with God. Jesus was 100% God but also 100% Man. He knows what it's like to be rejected, beat down, under pressure. He even sweated drops of blood from the anxiety. He understands.

Psalm 143:9 says, "Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD, for I hide myself in you." His arms are shelter for Today's Busy Teen from the media, her peers, even from her own self-loathing. He created her, made her beautiful, smart, strong and if she's popular with Him that's all that matters. How about a game of hide and seek with Jesus today?

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Special points of interest:

- Tickets available for our Grace In The Wilderness Teen Conference EMPOWERED JESUS GIRL on October 29, 2011.
- We're on Facebook. Become a fan of the Grace In The Wilderness Page. Look us up...



Psalm 32:7

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

Be Empowered for Christ

By Bailee Gillespie, 12

What does the word “empowered” mean? It can mean many things, but the “empowered” I think of is being empowered for Jesus Christ. Being on fire and pumped to learn more and more about Him. God is so wonderful and precious! That’s why we need to love Him more, pray more, and read His Word more. Sometimes we don’t always understand why He has a certain purpose for our life, but God wants what is best for us. He cares about us, loves us so much and wants to have a personal relationship with each and every one of us.

A lot of times it just seems like nobody and no one cares about you and what you’re going through, but God does. He is right there with us every step of the way. He waits for you and me to talk to Him and allow Him to be there for us through the toughest and hardest times in our lives. I need to do so much better at getting closer to Him! He is so amazing! Jesus Christ is full of miracles, blessings, love, hope, and much, much more. He loves each and every one of us! Staying close to Him, talking and praying to Him more will empower your faith and your personal relationship with Him so much.

I’m sure most of you have heard the verse Jeremiah 29:11. It is such an amazing and

wonderful verse. “For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you, not to harm you, but to give you a hope and a future.” We are all encouraged by a leader who stirs us to move ahead, someone who believes we can do the task He has given and who will be with us all the way. God is that kind of leader. He knows the future, and His plans for us are wonderful and full of hope. As long as God, who knows the future, provides our agenda and goes with us as we fulfill His mission, we can have boundless hope. This doesn’t mean we will be spared pain, suffering or hardship, but that God will see us through to a glorious conclusion.

Being empowered for Christ is a great way to show His love through you. It all depends on you though. Are you willing to reach God’s plan and be empowered through Him? If so, in the Bible, God says “Go.” This means Go and let Him use you to do amazing things for Him. Let Him lead and guide you. One of my goals as a Christian is to reach His plan for my life. No matter what the world is doing, or what I really want to do instead of doing the right thing, I always want to be empowered through Him. Through this walk with Christ, I may not always understand “Why.”

That may be anyone’s question to a breakup, a friendship that almost seems torn, a loss of a job or loss of a family member. But maybe He allows these things to happen to empower our faith and grow us closer to Him.

If your best friend never talks to you and is always ignoring you, you assume they’re mad at you, right? So you just don’t talk to them for a while. Well, it’s the same with God. If you never talk to Him, you won’t have a close relationship with Him. It’s exactly the same way with your mom, dad, anyone. If you ignore Him all the time, this includes me too; you will never have a personal relationship with Him. You won’t be empowered for Christ. This is why we need to take time out of our day, focus on Him and show God we care about Him. He will allow amazing things to happen in our lives. So grab that Bible, have a quiet time with God and be empowered in Him!



By Brenda Horne



Facing the Giants...

Why does God allow innocent people to suffer?

It’s part of his plan. - Rachel, 7th grade, 12 yrs. old

Because He loves them a lot. - Cheyenne, 11th grade, 17 yrs. old

It’s as if He is testing them. He wants to make sure that no matter what happens to them, they trust God! That’s what we need to do, trust God in every section of our life. He never puts something in your life that you can’t handle. We just need to trust God, and love him because He first loved us. - Savannah, 9th grade, 14 yrs. old

Because He has a plan for everyone. Cheyenne, 8th grade, 14 yrs. old

Examples: A young boy gets shot in a drive-by shooting. A small child is kidnapped from her neighborhood. An elderly woman gets mugged in the parking lot of a grocery store.

Or your Godly Sunday School Teacher gets cancer. Your Dad, who believes in Jesus with all his soul, has a massive heart attack. Your friend gets in a terrible car accident while on her way to church.

These are all horrible things that happen all the time.

What we must remember is we live in a *sin-filled* world. **God did not create the mess we live in now, we did that.** God created a beautiful, perfect world. But once sin entered, the world changed. Because of sin, bad things happen. Whether it’s our own sin or the sin of others, sin destroys and causes pain.

Now, what can innocent people do if their lives are turned upside down by

something horrible (no matter who caused the pain)?

First, recognize that Jesus is **not** your enemy...Satan is! Jesus is **not** the villain...Sin is! Jesus is your SAVIOR, your REDEEMER, and you’re FRIEND! Without Him, there is no hope, no peace, and no future. But WITH HIM, we can withstand the evils of this world and live in *His hope* even when it seems that the innocent suffer and wicked prosper.

Proverbs 14:32
When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge.

Proverbs 15:29
The LORD is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous.



From A Guy's Perspective: What Love Is Not... By Taylor Hawkins, 17

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 says, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails..."

Notice that the passage never says that "Love" is sex or anything to do with that. Teenage couples always get all caught up in this lie that lusting after someone means you love them. Sex is not Love. God is Love, and Love is God. Loving someone is showing them God through you. Don't let it get blurred.

Many times all girls want is to have an

emotional connection with a guy. Guys, on the other hand, a lot of times, want a sexually sinful relationship with a girl. Those guys will tell girls how beautiful and sweet they are, while they trick the girl into giving them exactly what they want... a lust-filled and sexually impure relationship.

Don't give into these lies. Before you go giving your heart away to a guy, get to know him and make sure he will bring you closer to God instead of pulling you away. And don't trick yourself into thinking you can change him. It never works out. Without you even realizing it, he changes you.

One day, you will meet the man that God made for you. Just as you will want his purity, he will want yours. No matter what that boy tells you, if he truly loves you, he will want you to stay pure. Stay strong in

God's Word and do not be deceived by Satan's lies. The world tells you that it is alright to have sex as long as you don't get pregnant. That is a lie. God created it for marriage.

In 1 Corinthians 6:13, the Bible says, "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." That means that your body is made to serve God. You can't serve Him while being impure. Save yourself for God and your future husband. Don't give it all away to some boy who thinks he's a man.

2 Timothy 2:22

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.



From a Girl's Perspective: A Precious Pearl By Reid Long, 17

Purity is something precious. Something innocent and irreplaceable. It's a present that God gives to everyone when they are born. It takes a woman of integrity and dedication to not open that present until her vows are said.

Men are not the only ones who struggle with this, ladies! We like to make them seem that they ALWAYS pull the purity right out of us, when that's not the case. In order for someone to take, someone must give. So guard your heart, soul, and mind from anything impure or unholy.

Protect that precious pearl of purity with your life. I know you ask yourself, "Why? It's going to be gone one day anyway." When you let your lustful desires reign over you, and give yourself away to someone, you can't take it back. I wouldn't test God. Fear the Lord. I truly believe God wants us to stay pure until marriage to learn this virtue, patience. It is an attribute that's hard to obtain, but all things are possible through Christ.

Maybe you're reading this and you're saying, "Well, this doesn't apply to me because I've already messed up."

The Lord gives new and fresh beginnings to anyone who wants to start over. You've been forgiven and you are more than your past mistakes. God is ready to guide you no matter where you are or where you've been in your life.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable.



Trusting In God

Proverbs 3:5 states, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

There is so much pressure on teenagers today, and it is so easy to fall into one of the devil's many traps. As a young adult, I know how hard it is to grow up in today's society. Teenagers today have to grow up in schools where the topic of God and salvation in the classroom isn't allowed. You may be a teenager who attends church every Sunday, helps with events, and prays before every meal in

the cafeteria; but you're not an exception from life's trials. God never promised that life would be easy, but He did promise that He is there with us every step of the way. We are put into certain situations in order to test our trust and faith in our Lord. Sometimes we are hit with a big obstacle, and it knocks us to our knees.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, trusted His Father completely when He carried that cross to Calvary. He was knocked to His knees many times, but His love and trust was so strong that He would get up and keep going. There are going to be moments in life

when we think nobody can help us with certain situations. Just remember that God sent His son to die for us so we could have a chance to spend eternity with Him.

There is nothing in the world that could hinder our Savior from helping us with anything. God uses our family, friends, church family, and even strangers to help us. If you're dealing with some unresolved issue or obstacle, put your trust in God. People can turn their backs on you, but God is always there with His arms stretched out ready to embrace you.

By Anna Gravely, 18



Soldiers

By Mallory Burr, 19

"I'm going to make you proud Mal, I promise!" Those were the last words my boyfriend told me as he drove out of the driveway to go to his recruiter's office. Today was the day he was leaving for boot camp. I stood and watched for a few minutes trying to hold back the tears until he was completely out of sight. When his white Explorer topped the hill, I turned and climbed into my car. As I shut the driver door, I let all the tears and sobs out. I didn't understand the feeling I was experiencing right at that moment. So, in between sobs I silently prayed to God that he would show me the good in this experience. I wanted God to not only let my boyfriend learn and grow in his relationship with God, but let my relationship grow leaps and bounds during these next 2 months.

I waited weeks for letters and months for phone calls, I just could not find the good in this situation. About a month after my boyfriend left, I sat through a sermon about winning people to Christ. Suddenly, I made a marvelous connection. After some research on the internet, I realized that being a soldier for the US military and being a soldier for God were a lot alike in many ways.

In an interview US Army veteran, Sgt. Bobby Maudlin, said, "As a soldier in the military, you have to stay disciplined, and strive to be the best you can possibly be for your country. As a Christian, you must also stay disciplined and be the best you can be for God. Always being alert...watching out for the enemy or watching out for the devil...in the end it's all the same thing."

Obviously, the ending goals of the two are different, but they both do the same things to reach their goals. The ending goal for a military soldier is to win the war, but soldiers for God want to win people to Christ and live in God's will to the best of our ability. God serves as our commanding officer, giving us orders that we must follow if we want to be in his will. Obstacles and dangers are something every soldier must face and overcome successfully in order to reach any goal. Military soldiers have obstacles such as bombs, guns, terrorists, and being away from home. God's soldiers have obstacles like drugs, alcohol, premarital sex, and peer pressure. Although these obstacles are just the tip of the iceberg for both of the soldiers, they all must be overcome in order to successfully and safely reach the ending goal. The word "soldier" can be a very broad term. It can include many

kinds and departments. For example, in the Church we have a Preacher, Sunday School teachers, Childcare Workers, the Choir, and then the Congregation. In the military, there is the Navy, the Marines, the Army, and the Air Force. Within each of these departments are many ranks and levels, but they all have to work together and do their individual parts to reach the ending goal.

Military soldiers are issued armor and weapons they use to protect themselves as they enter a battle. Well, in Ephesians 6 the Bible tells that God gave us armor that we must use in order to face everyday battles. God gave us the breastplate of righteousness, a shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit. We must use these to fight against the devil. God also gave us the Bible, and we must read it and learn from our past brothers and sisters, so we can move forward in the battle of winning people over to Christ. Just as military soldiers learn from their past wins and losses. Christians must treat every day as a battleground. We must always be alert, be righteous, and keep our ears open for our commanding officer's orders.



Choices

By Savannah Cochran, 20

Choices, there are so many! Teenagers are faced with choices every day. They ask themselves questions like, where will I go to college? What will I choose as my career? Who will I date? Who will I not date? Who will I marry one day? All of these are very important, but what I consider to be "big decisions," and also important, are the small decisions we make each day. The many small decisions we make often can affect our "big decisions."

One of those life altering decisions we must choose to make each and every day is "what kind of attitude am I going to

have today?" Our answer to that question each and every day should be, "I am going to have a good attitude today." My parents have taught me growing up that "my attitude determines my altitude," and that I should always have a positive outlook on the things of life. When I was younger, my Dad gave me a quote on attitude that goes like this:

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say - or do. It is more important than appearances, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is

that we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing that we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude...I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is, with you...we are in charge of our attitudes."

My Dad has also told me, "Attitudes are contagious. Is yours worth catching?"

The Bible also has something to say about the kind of attitude people should have. Philippians 4:8-9 says:



Choices (Cont'd)

By Savannah Cochran, 20

"...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

What these verses are saying is that Christians shouldn't have anything bad in their lives. Where bad things are, bad attitudes will also be. In order to have a good attitude, we need to "think" on the things that Philippians 4:8-9 tells us. If we act on these things, God promises to be with us.

While I do feel strongly about having a good attitude, one of the most important decisions you can make is the choice of who you are going to follow. The Bible says in John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." This verse clearly tells us that Jesus "is the way." So then, Jesus is "the way" that we should follow. Jesus is also "the truth." So then, Jesus is "the truth" that we should follow. And last, but not least, Jesus is "the life." So that means Jesus is "the life" that we should follow. Choosing to follow Jesus I feel is the most important decision any person can make.

Jesus Christ died for all sins and rose again so that the world could know what "real life" is. Life cannot be "real" without Jesus! That is why it is so important to follow Jesus, and no one else. Many people may follow their friends or their family, but unless their friends or family are following Jesus they're probably not making the best choice. Choosing to follow Jesus will lead to peace, joy, love, godliness, kindness, and eternal life. But if you deny Jesus, and choose Satan or a false god, it will lead to fear, hatred, strife, evil, destruction, death, and eternal torment. You're standing at the crossroads! The choice is yours!

Kayla's True Story of Destruction and Truth

To start, I want you all to know that I am not perfect and I'm still fighting with the devil daily. It seems my life has been a roller coaster since the day I turned 13.

As a teenager, I gained more independence and made many choices that I was not old enough to handle. I began talking back to my parents, fighting with them continuously over clothes, friends, bedtime, etc. It was crazy! I look back now and want to slap myself for acting the way I did.

Eph 6:1-2 "Children, Obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right..."

When the Bible says "Obey your parents," I thought it just meant to *maybe* obey. At 13, I thought I was my own person and had the right to make my own decisions. In time I've realized that my parents were only looking out for me. Even now, at 23, I still go to them for advice. I've lost a lot of friends in my life but my family has always been there for me. My Dad always said, "Friends will come and go, but your family will never leave you."

I went through my rebellious stage for the majority of my teenage years. My parents struggled to control me but I fought them hard for my independence. I thought since my friends stayed out late, that I should be able to also. I pushed my limits continually and came home late often, dealing with my parents each time. I

would lie and give excuses to cover whatever I had done wrong. I was sneaky and knew I could lie my way out of anything... at least I thought I could.

At age 15, I got my driving permit, which gave me even more independence to push my limits. I also found my "true love." I, like most young girls, fell hard for my boyfriend and planned my entire life around him. I worshipped him and told everyone we would always be together.

While I was planning my life around this boy, God had other plans. He is the only one who knows my future and I'm sure He was laughing at me for trying to make my own plans.

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, plans for hope and a future..."

At the time, I thought I knew what love was. I remember making a vow to my boyfriend, to God and to my family to remain abstinent until marriage. Together we wore "true love waits" rings and vowed to never cross that line. I can honestly say that while we were dating we never crossed that line. I thought he respected me and I knew he would always be there for me. Two years went by and we grew apart. He was changing and things weren't as "happy" as they were in the beginning. We broke up and my world ended.

All my life plans had been circled around him. We were going to attend college together, get married, have kids, and live happily ever after, yet these were not God's plans. I was devoted to my boyfriend more than I ever should have been. Months later would prove to me how much trouble "love" can get you into at such a young age.

High school went on and I started acting like my other friends, pretending to be whatever they wanted me to be. I let the world take over my life and strayed from God's way. I started working at a restaurant at age 16. From 16-18, I missed a lot of church because of work. I was too ashamed to request Sundays off for church. The devil won again.

Years went by and the devil started to cause me to doubt my salvation and Christianity all together. I hated everything about church including the people. At age 17, I started hanging out with an older crowd that drank and partied all the time. I was young, independent and rebellious. When I was invited to an all night girls' campout with my older friends, I didn't see anything wrong with it. I went with the full intentions of not drinking and standing my ground when offered a drink.



Kayla's True Story (Cont'd)

James 1:13-14 "Let no man say... I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, but every man is tempted when he is drawn of his own lust..."

Unfortunately, the "fun" was too tempting so I had a drink and another... and another. After awhile, I was no longer in control of myself. The alcohol impaired my judgment and disabled me from making my own decisions. My willpower was gone and the devil had won again. My "friends" that allowed me to drink underage were not the friends they should have been. When I got sick, they were either passed out or having too much "fun" to care about me.

In the middle of the night I woke up to take a walk, hoping it would make me feel better. I ended up sitting by the fire because I was too uneasy and dizzy to move around. It scared me that I couldn't focus long enough to stand up. In a blur, a vehicle pulled up with a carload of guys that I went to high school with. I could barely see who they were. The night went on and one of the guys told me he would help me get home safely.

The next thing I remember was falling on the ground and just lying there with no one around me. I woke up bruised with no memory of what had happened the night before. I was terrified. I didn't know where I was, where my "friends" were or how I would get home. But I did know one thing; I had to get out of there. I found my "friends" passed out. They had no idea of where I had been or what happened to me. I grabbed my keys and ran to my real friend's house for comfort. I opened the door screaming in tears because I didn't know what else to do. There was nothing I could do. I look back and wonder why I never went to the cops, why I never called a friend, or tried to run or anything. And then I remembered, the guy that drug me away, left me with bruises, knew I was drunk, and took advantage of me was my "one true love" that had broken up with me months before.

I'm not telling you this to scare you but I want you to know your teenage years are priceless, so treasure them and don't let

"love" or "friends" ruin your path in life.

This story is the beginning of my path of destruction in life. After this incident, I was too ashamed to tell anyone, too scared to go to the cops and too prideful to do anything about it. I was terrified. I never even went to my parents because I was too ashamed. I held this burden for years and never went to God for comfort.

1 Peter 5:7 "Cast all your care upon him; for He careth for you."

The next few years, God tried to get my attention. In my Dad's words "the devil will throw bricks at you daily until he has covered you up by a wall that only God can tear down." In my case, my bricks were made with curse words, alcohol, drugs, bad friends, and dumb mistakes. As I look back, I don't hate God for what happened to me. I understand God was trying to get my attention and warn me of what alcohol could do to my life. The first warning should have gotten my attention, but I was so stubborn that I didn't listen. The next warnings came with alcohol poisoning, near death experience riding in a car with a drunken friend, depression, anxiety, getting caught drinking underage, community service, and finally I realized that my next warning would probably be my death or the death of a dear friend.

From 16-20 I was in and out of church because I was ashamed and didn't know what people knew about me. I also thought my church would judge me, yet they did not. They continually sent cards, emails and called to tell me they love me.

My mom and sister were the worst in my eyes. They would "bug" me non-stop about going to church and telling me they were praying for me. And what did I do? I ignored them and laughed about it with my friends. I was so hateful. I regret acting the way I did and I would do anything to go back and apologize. The truth is, I knew they were praying for me and I could feel it.

After getting caught for drinking underage, I moved back home. It was like going through rehab after being out of control for so long. I was hateful, tired and depressed. My mom would send me emails

with Bible verses and words of encouragement. Those emails rekindled my relationship with God, my mother and my church family.

I started going back to church with my boyfriend. I remember sitting in church knowing I was doing wrong in my life and finally just giving in and telling God, "OK, I'm listening!" It was as if a million pounds had been lifted off my shoulders. I vowed to God to try to stay on the straight path and use my testimony to help others.

A few months later, I felt the Holy Spirit leading me back to my home church with my fiancé. Everything seemed to finally be getting back into place. Our preacher said something that stuck with me. He said, "It's time to LET GO AND LET GOD!" I let go of my problems, my planning, and my life plans and let God help me and guide me in HIS plans for my life.

I hope my testimony helps you make better decisions in your life. God promises us salvation but He doesn't say it's going to be a smooth and easy road in life.

1 Peter 5:10

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.





Breathe In, Breathe Out

By Marie Pritchett

You start your day determined that today you will do the right thing, you will say the right thing and you will be all that God wants you to be! You know that you should start your day in prayer but you are running late. You will pray when you get in the car on the way to school.

You dry your hair but even after the flat iron you see those little crinkles in the back that you HATE!!! Ugh!!! No matter what you do you can't get it perfectly straight like all the "other" girls. Breathe in, Breathe out!!! Ok, this is going to be a GREAT day!!!

You leave your room determined. On the way downstairs your little brother almost knocks you down as he charges into the kitchen. You start to scream out at him but remember that you are a NEW person today and you are going to be an example of God's love. A feeling of pride comes over you. Although your hair looks awful and you wanted to lash out at your brother you didn't. Hey, I can do this!!!

You sit down to breakfast and, instead of praying, you look over your English notes to make sure you remember everything for your BIG test today. Just as you are finishing your little brother knocks over his chocolate milk and it splashes all over your notes and runs down onto your new shirt and the only clean jeans in your closet!!! I know that the Bible says, "A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:10-12) but you have reached your limit!!!

Not only do you punch your little brother but you throw your notes on the floor and scream at your Mom as she tries to clean the chocolate off your new shirt ("Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil" Psalm 37:7-9).

You stomp upstairs with tears streaming down your face. You slam your bedroom door so hard that you think it will fall off the hinges. As you lay on the bed crying, slowly your anger at your Mom and your brother turns to anger at yourself. How could you have lost your temper again? You were so determined to be that girl that the Youth Pastor and Sunday School

Teachers tell you about each week.

What is wrong with you? You are such a failure!!! Within minutes you hear a knock at the door. As your Mom comes in you see that she has a fresh pair of jeans and a clean shirt. No, it isn't your new shirt but at least it doesn't have chocolate all over the front of it.

As your Mom hugs you, you feel the anger slowly slip away. Even though you had messed up for the "trizillionth" time, your Mom continues to love you. That unconditional love is just a sample of God's love for us. He loves us even when we mess up. He is a God of second, third and even one hundred chances.

No matter what you have done you can start over at this very minute! Why not talk to God? He is always waiting.

Psalm 36:6-8

*How priceless is your unfailing love,
O God! People take refuge in the
shadow of your wings.*



Keep Parts Of Your Heart A Secret

By Lynn Cowell

As I write this, some good friends are in our kitchen teaching themselves how to make crepes. In the background, Demi Lovato's song "Skyscraper" is playing.

Check out these lyrics:

Skyscraper lyrics by Demi Lovato

Skies are crying, I am watching
Catching teardrops in my hands
Only silence, as it's ending, like we never
had a chance.
Do you have to make me feel like there's
nothing left of me?

You can take everything I have
You can break everything I am
Like I'm made of glass
Like I'm made of paper
Go on and try to tear me down
I will be rising from the ground

Like a skyscraper, like a skyscraper

While these lyrics do have a positive ending, she will rise again, the power she is giving to another human tears me up! "Do you have to tear me like there is nothing left of me? You can take everything I have? Break everything I am?"

She must have really been vulnerable with this guy that he had the power to tear her down; take everything she had.

We've got to be smarter than that. We have to protect our hearts; guard the most valuable thing we have.

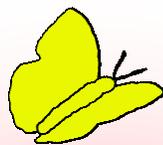
I made the mistake one too many times of dumping my heart out just because a guy would listen. Just because he showed interest, I would spill all my secrets.

Each time we bear our heart to another who had not put a ring on our finger, we are playing in snow without gloves. Every

relationship ends in one of two ways: you either get married or you break up. When you break up, frost bite sets in the exposed heart.

Be wise. Hold a bit back. Keep the relationship interesting and protect yourself at the same time! Share bits and pieces of your heart but keep a guy knowing that the best parts of you are yet to come. One day, if the Lord reveals to you that this is the man that you are to marry, after you say, "I do" you can share every little bit!

If you liked this article, you'll love Lynn's new book, "His Revolutionary Love" available on Amazon! You can also connect with Lynn on Facebook at Lynn Cowell, on Twitter at Lynn Cowell and her website at www.LynnCowell.com. You'll find some pretty cool free stuff there!



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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 and Teen Girl. Our mission is to encourage women and teen girls:

-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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*Grace In The Wilderness Teen Conference
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Pickens, SC*

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You miss 100% of the shots that you don't take. —Wayne Gretzky

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