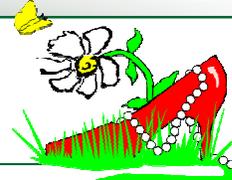


Grace In The Wilderness



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



Move over, Mountain!!

Matthew 17:20 says, "... If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall be removed; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it by the handle of anxiety, or by the handle of faith. ~Author Unknown

Got burdens? Got trials? Most people do! And Grace Ankles, Today's Busy Woman, is no exception! She faces mountains—trials and heartaches way bigger than she is and beyond her ability to conquer. Often she's at the end of her rope, trying desperately to tie a knot in it, just to hang on!

Like most of us, how many times has she taken her burdens to the Lord only to go straight back to the altar and take them right back up again? All things are possible with God—wouldn't you think we'd know this by now?

Does Today's Busy Woman think her burdens are too heavy for the Lord? Why does she feel the need to be in control of her burdens when she has someone, *no less the Lord of the Universe even*, to give them to? It really doesn't make sense that she'd want to keep them, does it? It is...however, a matter of faith.

But where can Today's Busy Woman get this kind of faith...faith that moves a mountain? ...Mercy! Some of these mountains, Grace Ankles just

stares at in amazement feeling tiny in their massive shadows as shivers run up her spine. What's a girl to do?

"Faith can move mountains, but don't be surprised if God hands you a shovel." ~Author Unknown.

God provides us a blessing of faith (Romans 12:3), but He expects us to do the work to help it grow. Jeremiah 29:13 promises "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." And Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

What better place to hear the Word than at our local church? And is there any substitute for time spent reading our Bibles and praying? How can we develop trust in anyone unless we spend time with them? Don't think it's any different with God.

Matthew 11:28-30 says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The rest that Jesus promises is His love, healing and peace. But no where in these verses does He promise an end to our efforts.

By Sharon Hawkins

Come unto me... that's where it starts. It's all about trust. Gotta take that first step out of the boat. *Take my yoke upon you...* working through our problems with Jesus' help. *For my yoke is easy...* could it be that He can hold the weight of it off of us because He wears the other part of the yoke? *My burden is light...* and He will carry the heaviest load as we trust Him and walk beside Him?

But, even if Today's Busy Woman places her burdens on the altar and leaves them there, is that enough? Could it be that Jesus wants even more from her? A closer relationship maybe?

What if she lets Him lead her through hard times—working, stopping, and running as He guides her? Could she learn the lessons He's teaching and grow stronger, even while receiving the rest He promises?

In His faithfulness, He's working all things together for the good of those who love Him. In our struggles, we can see Him. In our trials, we can learn to trust Him, and in our fears, we can come to a new level of faith.

Next trip to the altar maybe what we need to do is crawl up on the altar with our burdens. By putting ourselves on the altar, it doesn't mean that we are dying...*No, just the opposite!* We are really just learning to live by offering ourselves as a living sacrifice. As my Pastor says, "Since He died for us. Isn't it the least we can do to live for Him?"

Volume 4, Issue 1, Bi-Monthly

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Hebrews 11:6
But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.



A New Focus for a New Year

By Diana Kilgore

Many of us are familiar with the saying, "Time is money." Well let's consider that our views of time as well

as the ways we prioritize time are similar to how we budget and disburse our money.

How to Spend Time Wisely:

- Determine not to waste it;
- Make a schedule based on priorities;
- Let God run the schedule; and
- Walk regularly with Him.

Money, like time, is given to us to use. We are merely stewards and dare not waste or misuse it. Have you tried to budget or increase your giving in the past and failed? It's alright. Proverbs 24:16 reminds us, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief."

I challenge you to join me in putting the needs of others above our own desires in 2011 and watch our Lord work as only He can.

This New Year brings with it new challenges for many families – trying to make ends meet when illness has taken

a front seat or struggling with keeping the electricity on since Dad was laid off. The majority of Americans live paycheck to paycheck and within 30 days may lose everything they have.

Colossians 4:5 tells us to "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." With that in mind, how will you choose to answer the following questions?

Do I really need this new pair of shoes right now? OR Would my money serve a better purpose by purchasing a \$31.00 box of food from Angel Food Ministries that can feed a senior citizen for a month or a family of four for a week? Philipians 2:3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves."

Do I really need to get the latest model cell phone right now? OR Would it be better to partner with Feed A Hungry Child and, for only \$4.00 a week, satisfy the hunger of the 1 out of 17 students in Pickens County who receives inadequate nutrition until returning to school the following Monday? Romans 12:3, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to

every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Do I really need to get this new computer or piece of furniture right now? OR Would it benefit more people for me to commit \$25.00 per week to the "Journey in Faithfulness" stewardship campaign at church to help retire debt and continue reaching lost souls for Christ and discipling the saved? Ephesians 4:16, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Lord, help me to put aside my own selfish desires so I may clearly see the more serious needs of others and wisely designate the money you have entrusted me with. Thank you for this opportunity to grow closer to you and watch you perform miracles as only you have the ability and resources to accomplish. I give you my heart and my finances to do with as you choose. May both grow in you in 2011. Amen

Titus 2 Wisdom for Women: Breaking the Cycle of Addiction

By Marie Koth



Have you ever said something and thought, "I sound just like my mother?" It's very common because we learn how to deal with life situations from our parents. We also learn addiction from our parents if they struggle with addiction.

Usually when someone mentions addiction we think of drug addiction, but it can be exhibited in various ways such as being a workaholic, overeating, exercising to the point of losing too much weight, gambling, overspending, hoarding, being drawn to relationships with people who are hurtful to us, and being a perfectionist.

It is also shown in other ways, including obsessive-compulsive behaviors such as constantly cleaning and avoiding contamination, needing to always have everything in its place, obsession with sex, an excessive need to please people and/

or rescue them, and alcoholism. If you have seen these behaviors in yourself and/or family members, addiction may be a problem.

I'll tell you a little about me and my family and how the addiction cycle was broken for me. In my family, the primary addiction has been to alcohol. The farthest back I can trace the cycle is my great grandmother. She married an alcoholic. My grandmother grew up with an alcoholic father and as an adult married an alcoholic. My mother grew up with an alcoholic father and later married an alcoholic. And, yes, I grew up with an alcoholic father and did the last thing I ever wanted to do – I married an alcoholic.

How does this cycle go on, generation after generation? As I mentioned at the beginning, we learn how to deal with life from our parents. When I began recovery I discovered that this pattern was very common. So how can this cycle be broken?

To break the cycle, healing must take place – emotional healing of our relationships with family and others and, most importantly, spiritual healing through a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and work in a recovery group. For me, emotional healing of family relationships came after surrendering every facet of my life to Jesus, giving Him control.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we are told that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! Once I asked for forgiveness for all I had done and gave Him total control of my life, Jesus began to heal me and change me. Because all I knew were unhealthy ways of relating to others, I also needed to go to a recovery group to learn how to have healthy relationships and to reinforce new, healthy habits.

Breaking the Cycle of Addiction (Cont'd)

By Marie Koth

“What is a recovery group?” you might ask. Recovery groups are also known as Twelve Step programs. The first Twelve Step recovery group was Alcoholics Anonymous, which came into being in the mid-1930s and was based on the Bible. The twelve steps delineate the process necessary for emotional and spiritual healing, our primary need. Those in the meetings offer their experience, strength and hope to others seeking recovery so that they can solve their common problem.

My husband and I have been very blessed. I began recovery and my new

life in Christ in 1982 and six years later he began his new life. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Not only did God heal each one of us individually, but He healed our marriage that seemed at the point of no return. My husband attended Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings and I attended Al-Anon meetings for family members of alcoholics; we also became active in church. After he had been sober a year, God led us to begin a Christ-centered twelve step group to help others find the new life and health that we had

found. God can take whatever happens in our lives and use it for good. Today He is still using us to offer our experience, strength and hope through a group called Working With Wisdom that meets at Blue Ridge View Baptist Church. If you have been touched by addiction and are ready to begin healing, Working With Wisdom may be of help. For more information, contact me, Marie Koth, at (864) 878-1687.

Luke 1:37
Nothing is impossible with God.



Valentine's Day

By Jo Ann Case

As I thought about Valentine's Day this year, my original attitude was the usual negative. My secret pal at work gave me little notes and a pair of valentine socks – black with red hearts. I thought, how appropriate, black. I hate Valentine's Day!

Then, the Lord began to deal with me about my attitude. I have allowed Valentine's past to hold me hostage. I've even been known to wear black in protest! In the spirit of Scrooge, I began to review the past, present and possible future in light of Valentine's Day.

My original wedding anniversary was on Valentine's Day and I had held onto the bitterness caused by harboring ill feelings over all the hurts and losses over those years. I won't even give dignity to those memories today because they are firmly in the past and don't need to be resurrected. Then I thought about my time with John and even though there were pleasant memories, there were also very painful ones. Valentine's Day in our last year together was tainted by the mental illness from which he suffered and by his untimely death just one week later. Again, those memories, both positive and negative are now firmly placed in the past. I know that from time to time, they will rise again, but I need to deal with them immediately so as not to be taken captive again by those thoughts.

As I continued down memory lane, I came to the present. I thought about

the origin of Valentine's Day in the first place. It is a celebration of the love, sacrifice and life of one priest back in 269 AD who lost his life for his beliefs. The beginnings of the Valentine celebration were originally pagan, but the works of Valentine and his death on Valentine's Day caused a dark holiday to become one celebrated the world over in honor of love and sacrifice. When the evil Roman ruler of the day outlawed marriage, Valentine secretly married couples. He was imprisoned and sentenced to death. Valentine's last note was to the daughter of a prison guard stating, “with love from your Valentine”. Thus, the tradition of exchange cards and letters was born.

In light of that inspiring story, I decided it was time to lay down the negative and pick up the positive. I also thought of a song that we often sang in church over the past few years on Valentine's Day – Written in Red.

In letters of crimson God wrote His love on a hillside so long long ago. For you and for me Jesus died.

Love's greatest story was told. I love you. I love you. That's what Calvary said. I love you. I love you. I love you written in red.

Down through the ages God wrote His love with the same hands that suffered and bled. Giving all that He had to give.

The message so easily read: I love you. I love you. That's what Calvary said. I love you. I love you. I love you.

*Oh precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow.
No other fount I know.
Nothing but the blood the blood of Jesus.
I love you. I love you. That's what Calvary said. I love you. I love you. I love you written in red.*

Since Christ gave the ultimate gift of love and sacrifice for me, I think it is time that I lay aside the past negative images and grasp the present in hopes of a better future. The present – the Lord is my husband and He loves me in letters written in red. And He gave His life so that I might live. And live abundantly!

As for the future, who knows? All I know is the lover of my soul has a plan for me and it is not to harm or hurt me and He promises that He will give me the desire of my heart if I follow Him. I can't go wrong by placing my trust and hope in Him!

This week, I am sending notes to those select few people in my life that have special prominence. I think I'll wear red this year and embrace the true meaning of Valentine's Day – love and sacrifice!

Happy Valentine's Day!

Song of Solomon 2:4
*He brought me to the
banqueting house, and his
banner over me was love.*





Oh, No, He Didn't!

By Brenda Horne

We are waiting for a lady to pull out of her parking space at Belk. My husband, Randy, is driving, and my girls (16 and 10) are in the back seat. Randy has his blinker on indicating we want her parking place and we patiently watch as the lady maneuvers her way out of the spot, so we can pull in.

As she pulls away, all of a sudden, from out of nowhere, a man comes flying up in his car and whips right into our parking spot! Yep, the spot that we had so patiently been waiting for! "OH NO HE DIDN'T" ..I holler at the windshield, I look back at my girls and exclaim "Tell me he didn't just steal our parking spot!"

I start beating on the windshield and hollering that he better get out of our parking place! (My girls are agreeing with me but trying to hide at the same time.) I was ready to get out of that truck and give that man a piece of my mind.

I look over at Randy (expecting some kind of response from him, some kind of road rage, verbal beating, *something* we could both say to this.. this... 'Parking place stealer'), when he very calmly says, "We'll just find another spot."

"WHAT?!", I screech. "Find another

spot?! We already had a spot... *that spot!!*" I hit the windshield repeatedly pointing to the 'now taken' parking space. Randy turns off the blinker and slowly drives away to find another parking space (while my girls are snickering yet still trying to remain hidden from view).

I sat there fuming!! I told Randy if I had been driving I would have rammed that man's car! (The girls laughed and were grateful I wasn't driving.) Randy looked back at the man and said to me, "Look, it's an old man, let him have the parking spot. Maybe he needs it worse than we do."

But I didn't care if he was old or not. He was rude and I wanted to go teach his rude self some manners. Who does he think he is, stealing MY PARKING SPACE! The spot we had patiently waited for -we even had our blinker on to show we were getting that parking space. I said, "He better hope I don't see him in Belk!" (The girls were hoping the same thing.)

Yet Randy just kept saying, "Let it go Brenda, it's no big deal, we'll find another spot". (Where is his road rage when I need it?)

When we found another parking spot on the next row over, I had calmed down (to

the relief of my girls). And by the time we got into the store, the incident was completely over and gone from my mind. (and my daughters could come out of hiding)!

As I looked back on this whole situation, I realize how completely wrong I was!! How totally un-Christlike I had acted. My reaction was completely against what the Bible teaches!

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

My entire response was completely "of the devil". Who do I think I am?? *Who do I say I am??* I know I am a Christian, so I should act like one!!

Proverbs 21:23
*He who guards his mouth
and his tongue
keeps himself from calamity.*



Doing the Right Thing

By Cathy C. Whisnant

In January of 2009, I heard the words no one wants to hear, "Because of budget cuts, you will no longer be employed by the School District effective in two weeks."

Ten months later, I finally received the phone call I had been waiting for! God had opened doors and allowed me to come back into the School District. If I didn't already know God has a great sense of humor, I certainly learned this character trait of His when He placed me, not in the office environment I was accustomed to, but in the classroom. And it wasn't just any classroom, I was a kindergarten assistant to twenty-one active five year olds.

Two months later, I tripped in the classroom and broke my foot, ten days before Christmas! As I sat at home unable to

do anything, God began to speak gently to my heart.

I learned much in my first days as a kindergarten assistant. I learned new names and new attitudes. I learned new phrases that teachers use to get attention. I learned how twenty-one five year olds have twenty-one different attitudes. God spoke to my heart about one of those attitudes and his name was Dennis. He didn't know the meaning of quiet. His first words every morning were, "If I do the right thing, can I play outside?"

He continued asking this same question every ten minutes! We would always give him the same answer, "Show us you can do the right thing and then you can play outside."

Don't get me wrong, we loved Dennis very much. But the same question for

seven hours a day and 180 school days gets a little old.

As I sat with my foot propped up, God turned this question around on me. He asked me, "Mrs. Whisnant, are you doing the right thing?" I was so STUNNED! "What?" Are you talking to me, God?" He replied, "Yes, I am talking to you. Are you doing the right thing?"

After hearing this difficult question from God, I begin to understand why Dennis had such a hard time. Sometimes it seems impossible in our sin nature to always do what we know is right.

So the question arises, what is the right thing that will keep me on the right path? How can I live a holy life and not just have holy moments?

Doing the Right Thing (Cont'd)

By Cathy C. Whisnant

A teacher of the law asked Jesus this same question. He asked, "Of all the commandments, which was the most important?" By this time in Jesus' ministry, there were over 613 commands written. It would only be natural for one to want to know which was the most important. Jesus chose to give this man the two most important commands.

Let's look at the first command Jesus said was the most important. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "Love the Lord **YOUR** God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your strength." He goes on to command that we teach this command to our children. Grandparents, do not think we are off the hook. He also tells us in Deuteronomy 4 to "teach them to your children and your grandchildren."

How will they know how to love God in this great manner unless we teach them by our example?

Moses gives us six ways in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy.

1 ~ Talk about Him while you sit in your home. We leave little time to teach about loving God because, not unlike our children, we too are consumed with texting, facebooking, twittering, and yes, even playing video games in our spare time. The Hebrews used **EVERY** day life to teach about God. When things got tough, they didn't walk around

wringing their hands, teaching their children to worry. They held their heads high saying, "My God shall supply all my needs!" They didn't give in to peer pressure to love the things of the world more than the things of God. They taught, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If we want our children to love God with all of their being, we must make Him the most important part of **OUR** everyday lives!

2 ~ Teach them as you walk along the road, as you drive down the highway. What an opportunity to talk to your children about the things of God and all the great things He has done while riding down the road!! As you pass by all of creation, what a great way to teach them that God is the creator of all!

3 ~ Teach them when you lie down and when you arise. I am afraid that family devotions have become a thing of the past. In our busy lifestyles, we all fall into the bed at night without a thought of sharing God's Word with our families. If only for five minutes, we need to read a passage and pray with our children.

4 ~ Tie them as symbols on your hands, bind them on your foreheads, write them on the doorframes of your house. In other words, what place does God's Word have in your home? Is the Bible on the coffee table where all can see or is it un-

der something on the kitchen counter where you laid it down when you came in from church and it hasn't moved? Maybe it is still in the car. God tells us we are to place His Word in a place where all can see who we believe in, so our children can learn His word and know the importance it has in their lives!

Let's look at the second right thing God tells us to do. In Leviticus 19, we learn that the second greatest commandment is this in verse 18, "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of YOUR people, but love your neighbor as yourself..." Jesus was a living example of God's love; so we are to love and love as He did. This is the way others will know we are followers of Christ. Jesus tells us in John 15 "...love as I have loved you..." Do others know by the way we live that we love Jesus with all of our being?

It took some active five year olds to remind this middle-aged woman that the right thing 24/7 is to show that I truly love my God with all of MY heart, all of MY soul, and with all of MY strength and that I love my neighbor as myself. Yes, I want to do the right thing, not so I can go out and play, but so that I do not stumble in my Christian walk. I want to do the right thing so that I will leave a legacy to my grandchildren and great grandchildren I will never see or know on this side of Heaven.

How about you? Are you doing the right thing?



Keeping the Temple Fit

By Erin Lewis of Curves, Pickens, SC (864) 898-2400

Not New Year's **Resolutions**, but New Year's **Results!**

It's the time of year when we tend to reflect on the past year with all of its achievements and disappointments. We decide to make changes – this time for real! The number one resolution made by American women is to lose weight in the upcoming new year. That is no surprise, but how many actually succeed?

New Year's 2009, I too made the same resolution and was successful in losing 55 lbs. What was different about that New Year's and the previous two years when I had pledged the same resolution? I believe it is in the attitude we have toward our weight loss goals and exercise that makes the difference. Do you view exercise as painful? Boring? Time consuming? Not going to work? If so, it

won't work for you in the long run. If we change our attitude to view exercise as:

- *a break from a stressful day
- *time for yourself
- *a reward for your body for working so hard for you
- *a gift to your family so you will remain healthy and here
- *a gift to your Lord since your body is HIS temple

Wouldn't this attitude change have an effect on your ability to stay focused and successful this year? Exercise is not a punishment but a celebration of your body, soul and mind. You owe it to yourself, your loved ones and your Lord to treat your body as the wonderful, marvelous creation of a loving, awesome God! Plan to start your New Year with guaranteed results, not empty resolu-

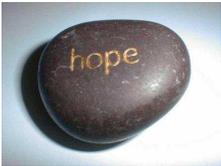
tions, by implementing the following easy steps:

- *Pray and spend time with your Lord every day –give thanks for your healthy body -ask for patience and strength while you undertake this new attitude -give him the glory.
- *Do 30 minutes of SOMETHING each day! Walk, stretch, lift weights, swim, etc. (housework doesn't count!). Join a gym if you can, where you will feel committed and motivated.
- *Pick one good habit to adopt each month (drink more water, give up soda, etc.) By the end of the year you will have adopted twelve good habits!

3 John 1:2: Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good **health** and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.

A Garden In The Wilderness: Finding Hope When All Hope is Gone

By Marie Pritchett



When a wife loses a husband she is called a widow. When a husband loses a wife, he is called a widower.

When a child loses his parents, he is called an orphan. But, did you know...there is no word for a parent who loses a child? That's how awful the loss is!

Losing a child is a horrific experience no parent should ever have to face.

Unfortunately, I am one of "those" people. I have faced the gut-wrenching pain of losing a child. My son, Josh, died just weeks before his 21st birthday. He was my oldest child and would have been 26 years old this past September.

You don't ever get over the loss, and parts of you may never accept it, but you must find ways to cope with it the best you can. I'm not saying it's easy, because it's not. In fact, it may end up being the toughest thing any of us will ever endure.

For me, I knew I had to find Hope when ALL Hope was gone. I was reaching, no *grasping*, for anything, *anything at all* that would give me even a sliver of hope. I needed hope that things were going to be ok, hope that I could begin to make some sense of these feelings I was feeling. I had so many questions about why. Why did this have to happen? Why me? Why my son?

I knew that Josh was ok, but I needed to know that me and my family would eventually be ok too. Not perfect, not like we were, but at least ok. When all hope is gone, you still have to hang on to, yep, *hope*. Huh? How do you hang on to hope when all hope is gone?

There is always a tiny bit of hope left, even in the most dire situations. You just have to look for it. The Bible is our guide. It is our "life manual" if you will. When Josh died I searched my Bible for any and every verse that would bring me comfort and I highlighted them.

Here are just a few that helped me during my darkest hours:

Psalm 62:5-6, Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress. I will not be shaken.

From Psalm 9:9, *The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.*

From Psalm 34:18, *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

From Matthew 5:4, *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

From Revelation 21:4, *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

Rick Warren said, "What gives me the most hope every day is God's grace, knowing that his grace is going to give me the strength for whatever I face, and knowing that nothing is a surprise to God."

Hope brings our dreams to life, and gives us a future to look forward to. And yet, we don't seem to fully understand how much we need it until it is gone, lost, or utterly destroyed. More often than not, our hope is stolen from us by circumstances that are beyond our control. There are times when our hope is lost because we never saw the storm coming. Storms show up out of nowhere to wreak havoc and take everything we knew to be true.

The question that remains, then, is how do we find hope when all is lost in our lives? How is hope restored? The answer to these questions is not in any specific set of steps directing us on how to regain our hope or to make things better in our lives. If it was so easy to regain hope, there would not be so many of us searching for it. The better question, then, is not "HOW", but "WHO" can help us find hope.

The "WHO" is the one that the Bible describes in Hebrews 6:19 as a "*firm and secure anchor of our soul.*" When the storm comes and the sea rages, God is able to be what we cannot. He is strong, stable, loving, and secure. He can be the rock or the anchor that holds us still.

Placing our hope in God does not mean that the storms in our lives will not come. It just means that only He has the power to provide peace in the middle of our storms. God explains this to us in Isaiah 43:2 that "*When you pass through*

the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you." The Holy God of the Bible is a loving, kind, and unpredictable God that is full of surprises. He can bring hope back into our lives in ways that we can't even begin to dream or imagine. God can give us hope through the hug of a friend, the prayers of someone far away, a sunset that dazzles us with its million colors, the soothing sounds of the crashing waves or simply seeing a butterfly fluttering around.

The part we play in recognizing God in the midst of our storm is simple but sometimes very difficult for us; we have to slow down, look, listen and try not to panic. He may be using a song we have heard hundreds of times before, a book that has sat on our bedside table forever, or a picture we walk past every day. I am amazed at how God longs for us to recognize the hope and joy that only He can bring into our lives.

In Isaiah 61:1-4, the prophet Isaiah states the truth that Jesus came to fulfill God's wish "*...to comfort those who mourn...to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*" God wants us to live hope-filled lives.

There are times when we need more than just prayer to get us through the storms of life. We need someone to walk with us through the valley and to help us slowly climb back up the mountain.

I have been so blessed to be surrounded by a wonderful family and the most amazing friends in the world. But sometimes they don't know how to help unless I tell them. Reach out to others and allow them to love on you and help you. There were so many times I wanted to shut myself off from the world, but if I had done that, how would my family have survived?

No matter how awful the storms are in your life, no matter how hopeless the situation may seem, there is always a rainbow of hope during and after the storm, just waiting for you through God's love.

Job 14:7
For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.



Which Cross Do You Bear? By Angela Long

Which cross do you bear? Notice the question wasn't do you bear a cross but rather, which cross do you bear?

The word bear means to hold or remain firm under a load. Everyone has a cross to bear for it allows us to feel the weight that Jesus must have felt when He bore a cross on His back to Calvary that was weighed down by our sins and transgressions. Some of us bear the cross of poor health; others may bear the cross of broken relationships while others bear the cross of unforgiveness, broken dreams, poor finances, abuse, neglect, betrayal, loss of a job or loss of a loved one.

We all have a cross to bear, for **Matthew 10:37-39** says...he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not wor-

thy of me. Oh, how I want to follow after Jesus, for His way is the only true way, no matter how difficult it may be to carry the cross I have been given. Remember the definition of bear is to **hold or remain firm** under a load. Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who bears our burdens, **Psalm 68:18-20**, and helps us to carry the load or weight of our cross and to remain firm in Him.

I once heard a story of an old lady who was tired and worn down from the cross she had to bear for many years. She decided to go check out some crosses that she has seen others bear to see if they were easier to carry. The old lady tried to pick up the first cross but it was so heavy that she was unable to place it on her back. Then she picked up the next cross

and realized that it wasn't the right size. After trying a number of crosses, the old lady finally found one that was a perfect fit and was just the right weight. She soon realized that it was the same cross she had been bearing for years.

You see God knows which cross we can bear. It is no mistake that the cross you have to bear is the one God meant for you. Why must we bear a cross? **Luke 14:26-28** says that ...whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. I long to be a disciple of Jesus and tell others about Him, but in order to relate to others, I must experience bearing a cross that others are having to bear. God uses the wood of the cross to ignite fiery trials that we must walk through for He knoweth the way that: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold, **Job 23:9-11**.



Pink and Fluffy

It came in a beautifully decorated hat box—a gift any woman would love! A luxurious, thirsty Egyptian Cotton towel in the most delicate shade of pink. It

was gently scented from the delightfully fragrant candle included in the box and so soft you could practically fall asleep resting your face against it. Only a hardworking woman could understand how special a gift it was!

What made it even more special was that, at the time, I didn't know who had given it to me. My Secret Sister at Church had blessed me with this thoughtful gift. She was someone who was thinking of me, praying for me, planning and doing things especially for me, then giggling about them because I had no clue who she was—a hardworking woman herself, no doubt!

I knew she had put a lot of thought into this gift and I heard loud and clear the message she was sending. "You deserve a break, you deserve to be pampered. I think you're special, I understand!" Awwwh, how sweet!! I was so touched. (Thanks, Jan!!!)

I decided right away not to waste this precious gift on a simple shower. No, I was going to savor this gift. The next hard day I had, it was going to bring me the comfort, the pampering that its giver had intended. It sounded funny, but I couldn't wait...o)...not for the hard day, of course, but for the ease it would bring.

So, I did what any woman would do...I hid it! I put my towel up high in my linen closet on top of some curtains I was storing there. I put it out of sight from the men in my house (my husband and my two boys) and waited for the next day I really needed some pampering.

Sure enough it didn't take long for the next hard day to come and, boy, was it a "doozie!" Everything that could go wrong that day, did. I couldn't wait to get home from work. After supper, I was going to steal away, fill the tub with the hottest water I could stand, drizzle my favorite bubble bath into the current, light my candle and soak until I looked like a prune. Then I was going to use my pink, fluffy, luxurious Egyptian Cotton towel to comfort my weary body.

I hurried through supper and cleared the table. At last, it was time. I went to the linen closet and felt up high where I had hid my towel. What?!!! It wasn't there! No, it must be a mistake! I went back to the kitchen and got a chair to stand on. I combed the shelves and was getting just a little frantic in my search as my sweet husband "bee-bopped" into the room.

"Whatcha doing, honey?", he innocently AND cheerfully asked. Then I explained that I was looking for my new towel. "Was it pink?", he sweetly, unknowingly, inquired.

I froze...Fear, disbelief, disappointment and anger struck the chords of my heart all at once. And, my response to my husband I'm sure was anything but melodious to his ears!

By Sharon Hawkins

Bless his unknowing, innocent "man" heart! Earlier that night, he had been preparing to get a shower and caught a glimpse of the towel and just grabbed it right on up and used it without a thought for its "preciousness". There it hung now drying on the back of the door like any old normal, unappreciated 'man' towel.

Some things that mean so much to us, may not be understood by our men. God sure made men and women different from each other! Aren't you glad? I am! But we've got to communicate, communicate, communicate to avoid trouble!

When Scott heard the whole story, he was so sorry he had spoiled my surprise. I should have told him from the start about my towel instead of hiding it. The next chance he had after that, he made it all better! He gave me a beautiful box with a special towel and included a gift set of my favorite perfume. He even sprinkled powders on the towel to give it an "extra girly, pampering appeal". He is so romantic and sweet like that and I'm so blessed!

Looking back, we laugh every time we talk about the night he lavished himself in luxury with my special towel. But, in the end, I had to forgive him.

You see, I love him more than a towel, ..and that's saying something...**IT WAS PINK AND FLUFFY!!!!**

Genesis 5:2

He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.



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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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Grace In The Wilderness
Women's Conference

March, 2011

Blue Ridge View
Baptist Church
Pickens, SC

Check us out at
www.WildernessGrace.org

A state of mind that sees God in everything is evidence of growth in grace and a thankful heart. —Charles Finney

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