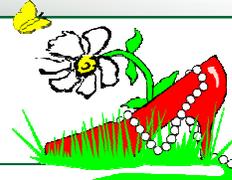


Grace In The Wilderness



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

"Help! I've Fallen and I Can't Get Up!"



Grace Ankles Today's Busy Woman, was so depressed!

One day she fell into a deep pit and couldn't get herself out. The pit was a cold, dark, lonely, slimy place. In a world of hurt and so unhappy, no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't climb out.

Her family was facing a trial that seemed impossible and she was wallowing in the misery of it all. She played the details of it over and over in her mind as it made her angrier and sadder and sucked the very life out of her.

It didn't help any that the devil told her she belonged there in the pit, told her she didn't deserve to be out enjoying the warm sunshine. So, she moped around in the bottom of the pit. She found herself sleeping during the day because being awake was too painful. Then, oh, the agonizing, endless, sleepless nights!

Her husband fussed at her because he thought it was simple—she should just climb right out of that pit. He thought she was being selfish and hiding away. Her children begged her to come out and that made her feel guilty because she loved them all so much. It was too late, her "pity party" was in full swing!

But how could she drain this pain? Skirt this hurt? How

could she get her footing on such slick ground? How could she climb out?

Her friend, Hope Counts, came by to see her. She had been just where Grace was, so maybe she could help. Hope did have some good advice to encourage her friend: "Take one day, one hour, one minute at a time. Don't try to look too far ahead. Focus on the good things. Count your many blessings and be thankful for each one. Take some time for yourself and don't be so hard on yourself." She brought Grace a funny, inspirational book to read. Her visit was encouraging, but still Grace longed for something more.

After Hope left, Grace knelt by her bed begging God to rescue her as she sobbed into her hands. She felt God nudge her to her Bible. She opened it to the passage of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. There she found that He had such mental anguish about His coming death that He was sweating drops of blood. Matthew 26:38 says that Jesus was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

And what exceeding sorrow!! All His life He knew He was going to die and that His father would have to turn His back on Him. Each day He had to live with that terrible truth, yet His love for us was enough to keep Him going.

He understands our despair and He loves us so much!!!

Grace searched more verses about His love. She found in Romans 8:38-39 "...that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And in Psalm 139:7-8, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."

As she read, she thought about how she had truly made her bed in hell and how God's love was there with her too. Jesus knows better than anybody what it's like in the pit of despair. Grace felt His amazing love wash over her as it bathed her hurting soul like a warm, healing balm.

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Psalm 40:1-3

Grace lifted her tear-stained face toward Heaven then slowly she got up and took her first step up...up out of the pit!

By Sharon Hawkins

Volume 3, Issue 4, Bi-Monthly

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Conference for Moms of Special Needs Children

July 24

Mt. Airy

Baptist Church

Teen Girl

Conference

October 16

Blue Ridge View Baptist Church

Psalm 18:35

You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great.



As women, wives and moms, we find ourselves in a new generation—one where women often need to work. Yes, I said “need.” Many husbands find themselves unemployed and caring for the home while their wife works. Some families are carrying debt that requires income from both husband and wife just to make ends meet. And some women find themselves alone trying to maintain a home on only one income.

As a working woman, I am blessed to own and operate my own business. This blessing sometimes manifests itself through stress, conflict, and inadequacy. Is it possible to be a confident business woman and yet relinquish control of my business? Let’s look at Scripture for the answer to this question as well as some support and encouragement.

As a female business owner, I’d like to encourage you that God has placed you in a unique capacity to honor Him, but caution you to handle this responsibility with care and humility. You may be thinking, “How do I handle all the obligations of being a business owner, earn the respect of my clients and make my staff feel secure in their jobs and confident that I actually know what I am doing?” First of all, as business women we must remember that our business is God’s business—He is only allowing us to manage it for Him. Whew! That takes a little stress off but now we must be sure we manage it in a way that honors and glorifies Him.

Let’s look at a real life example—Nehemiah. When Nehemiah began the

overwhelming task of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, he did things in a specific order:

Nehemiah 1:4 tells us that the first thing he did was LISTEN (“when I heard these words”). Have I listened to what I am really supposed to be doing in my business? Where does God fit in? How does this company honor Him?;

Nehemiah “sat down, wept and mourned.” Do I really understand the magnitude of my job and the impact it has on my customers and employees?;

He “fasted and prayed.” How much time do I spend seeking God’s opinion on how He wants me to operate this business? Have I confessed any known sin that may hinder me from hearing God’s instruction? (vs. 6-7) Have I claimed God’s promises for the future? (vs. 8-9); Make a plan to accomplish your purpose and move forward in an organized manner. Nehemiah went to the king with a specific request, a timeframe for completing his task, and moved forward with the help of others.

It is also important to note that Nehemiah had to **clean up the mess** before the building could begin. I may need to reorganize some things to get my business where God wants it to be. I may need to clean out some things I thought important and embrace God’s vision.

I also need to **delegate responsibility**. Consult God on who he wants in which position. Are my employees working in the position best suited to their abilities? Am I wasting time and effort on tasks that I need to hand off for help? Jethro advised

Moses in Exodus 18:17-18, “...The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away...”

Finally, just as Nehemiah had Ezra read from God’s Word, I need to **incorporate the Bible into my daily schedule**. Do my employees see that God’s instruction is important to me? Do I let God handle situations praising Him for the results? Psalm 145:10-12 tell us, “All thy works shall praise thee O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power...”

Humility is a major ingredient in the recipe of a successful business. James 4:6 tells us that, “...God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble.” Pride and a desire to be “somebody” can lead to unwanted stress and depression. I was recently reminded of an excellent example—Elijah. In I Kings 19:4, Elijah wanted to die, “...for I am not better than my fathers.” Who ever said he was as good as his fathers in the first place? I may not have a spectacular Mt. Carmel mission but I am working on a heavenly assignment.

Dear Lord, my prayer for my sisters in Christ who operate a business, whether on a corporate level or as a home-based sole proprietorship, is that they take their hands off the wheel and turn over control to You. Whether they have been given one, two, or five talents, I pray that on every level they be a willing vessel for you to fill. Please use these ladies in a mighty way to show forth your glory. Amen



Titus 2 Wisdom for Women: Daughter of the King

By Mrs. Verna Mae Abercrombie

Proverbs 31:10 says, “Who can find a virtuous woman for her price is far above rubies.” A truly good wife is worth more than precious gems. Her husband can trust her and she will richly satisfy his needs. She will not hinder him but help him all her life.

Virtuous means a woman of character. She fears the Lord. This scripture is a picture of a busy mother. She works hard for her family, she is faithful, she is a help meet to her husband, she looks for bargains, she spends her money wisely, she is kind and generous to others. This virtuous woman can be found in our Christian homes, setting an example for

her children, holding on to faith in Jesus Christ, filling our homes with the sweet fragrance of affection—love influencing both husband and children. Verse 29 says, “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.”

Ladies, a good name is far above rubies. Your worth is much more than gold or precious gems. Why? You are a daughter of the King of Kings, if you have Jesus in your heart and life. We are perfect in God’s eyes, made perfect by the one who is perfect, Jesus Christ! Of course, we can’t be perfect. Only Jesus lived a perfect life.

If you don’t know my Savior, you can. Just believe in Jesus, repent of past sins, ask forgiveness, ask Him to come into your

heart. He will, He loves you and wants to receive you as one of His daughters.

These verses tell us about the virtuous woman’s work for her home and her family. Many of us wives and mothers work hard in our offices and the workplace, then come home facing another day’s work there.

Have you ever had a day when everyone wants a piece of Mom. Trying to prepare the evening meal, the baby is hungry, another little one wants you to sit down, hold him and read a book. The older ones need help with their homework and your loving, sensitive husband, “laying on the couch”—:O!)

Titus 2 Wisdom for Women: Daughter of the King (Cont'd)

wants your time to sit down and discuss his day at work. How do we handle this stress? We simply trust the Lord to carry us through day by day.

He is my strength and my help. You know, I find my prayer time and devotion in the early morning (as I enjoy my coffee, just asking the Lord to be my help and strength) is the key.

Margaret Holmes, a great Christian author, wrote a prayer that hits home to many of us ladies, "I Am So Tired".

Lord, You, who said, "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." I come to you right now, Lord for I am weary indeed mentally and physically. I am bone tired, all wound up, locked up tight with tension. I am too tired to sleep, or even think. I feel close to the point of exhaustion.

Lord, please let your healing love flow through me. I can feel it easing my tension, Lord. Thank you. I can feel my body relaxing. Thank you. I can feel my mind begin to go calm and quiet and

composed. Thank you for unwinding me, Lord, for unlocking me. I am no longer tight and frozen with tiredness, but flowing freely, softly, gently into your healing rest. Amen

Did you notice her faith as she asked? She said, "Thank you", believing God would answer.

Daughters of the King, we are fearfully and wonderfully made! God made each of us the way we are. Me, with my wrinkles, moles and all. We hear about going on diets and see weight loss programs on TV all the time. But, at my age, when I lose a pound it turns into a wrinkle! The good news is God still loves me and He loves you too, no matter what!

Sometimes when I get up in the morning with aches and pains and look in the mirror, it almost scares me. God sees and loves us just the way we are. We use makeup, fix up our hair and eyes to make us feel pretty and look good to others. That's fine, I believe God is pleased with his daughters when we look nice.

But, ladies, always remember you are special to God and to others too. Always keep your head held high. You might be beaten down by life's problems, you may be put down by others or face daily trials and problems and struggles in life (we all do). God made each of us differently and special. The inner beauty is what counts. A lasting charm and a quiet spirit are so precious to our Lord.

In closing, let's think about our "Hope of Heaven" as daughters of the King. What will Heaven be like? No more violence, sickness, cancer, pain, sorrow, tears, grief, or worries. Just a carefree eternal life with our Heavenly Father and our loved ones waiting for us. For years, I've said, "When I get to Heaven, I just want to bow humbly before Jesus, kiss His feet and praise Him and thank Him for His love, tender mercy and grace in reverence." I can imagine my Savior stepping forward bending down taking His daughter by the hand and saying, "It's alright, my child, I paid the price for your sins. Welcome Home!" What joy!!! That's the hope for every daughter of the King!!!



The Perfect Psalm for Marriage

By Cathy Whisnant

When I was asked to submit this article, I thought, "I cannot do this—not at this time in my life!" There is a couple, dear to me, going through a very difficult time in their marriage. It has rocked my world. It seems all hope is gone unless they open their hearts and allow God to intervene. But then God laid on my heart to write an article using Psalm 23. It can be a great source of comfort to those whose marriage is in Satan's clutches. Many Christian marriages today are in the midst of a great storm; the majority because one and/or both spouses have taken their focus off Jesus, who should be the head of the home

This is scripture not typically used for marriage advice, but more for funerals. It has 13 perfect gifts from God to give you peace and comfort during this storm. They are worth far more than money and I pray you will allow God to use them to put your focus back on Him. He can, will, and wants to heal your marriage.

Gift #1: Perfect Salvation: "The Lord is my Shepherd..." Sheep are very dependent for provision, guidance, and protection. Isaiah 40:11 says God tends His flock like a shepherd. He gathers the

lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart. Isn't it reassuring to know that He gathers and holds us close to His heart even when our spouses do not? John 10 says nothing can snatch us from His hands! When your marriage is in crashing waves and you feel no one loves you, remember your Shepherd does. He's holding you close. Even your spouse can't take this great love away!

Gift #2: Perfect Satisfaction: "I shall not want..." Many times, one mate is looking to the other to satisfy a need that only God can. Paul's focus was on the eternal, not the external things of the world. He knew only God could satisfy certain longings of our soul. Jesus came so we could have a life far more than anything we could dream. Let Him fill that emptiness and stop relying on your spouse to do something only God can do.

Gift #3: Perfect Rest: "He makes me to lie down in green pastures..." In Matthew, Jesus tells the burdened to come to Him and He will give us rest. Fighting for our marriages depletes our strength. We must slow our pace and give Him this burden. When we do, He gives us the rest we need to fight Satan's battles, to think clearly. Don't carry the weight of saving your marriage! God can give you

that perfect rest as He carries this burden for you!

Gift #4: Perfect Peace: "He leads me beside the still waters..." Who does not wish for a peaceful life? But when our marriages are on the rocks, peace is the last thing we feel. Isaiah 9:6 calls Him the Prince of Peace. Not only can He control the storms of nature, He can calm the storms of a broken marriage. Let Him control your storm. The road to peace is paved with knee prints. Fall on your knees and let God wash His everlasting peace over you and your marriage.

Gift #5: Perfect Restoration: "He restores my soul..." Many times when asked why they are not working to save their marriages, one of the marriage partners will say, "You don't know what I've done or you don't know what they've done." But God does. And He promises us perfect restoration. If He can restore us for the sins we have committed against not only our marriage partners, but against Him as well, then we should strive to forgive our spouses for the wrong they have done against us. Psalm 18:19 says, "He rescued me...He restored me because He delighted in me." God restores us because He delights in us. Allow Him to restore you to Himself and to your spouse.

The Perfect Psalm... (Cont'd) Gift #9: Perfect Comfort:

Gift #6: Perfect Guidance: *“He leads me in the paths of righteousness...”* We can only travel this path of righteousness if we follow Him obediently. Are you doing this in your marriage? Are you allowing God to direct the paths of your marriage? Confused about which way to turn? Trust God. He will direct your path as He promises in Proverbs 3:5-6.

Gift 7: Perfect Protection: *“Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...”* This is not just speaking of physical death. If your marriage is in what seems like a tropical storm, you wish you could die. No matter the circumstances, God promises to protect you. Some of my favorite verses are Isaiah 43 and Romans 8. They promise that nothing can separate me from Him, and that is all the protection I need.

Gift #8: Perfect Company: *“...for you are with me...”* I'm sure during this storm you feel utterly alone but He promises He is with us. Hebrews 13:5 says He will never leave us nor forsake us. The perfect guest is just sitting there waiting to comfort us...He has always been and will always be with you even when you feel alone. Just reach beside you and feel Him holding your hand.

“...your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” How many times have we fought with our spouses when we desperately just wanted them to hold us, comfort us, and tell us everything would be fine? Christ comforts us by wrapping His arms around us as He hides us in the shadow of His wing. He is waiting for us to climb upon His lap and allow Him to spread His arms out over us and hold us safe and secure under His wings.

Gift #10: Perfect Provision: *“you prepare before me in the presence of my enemies...”* You may feel your enemy is your own spouse! Matthew 19:26 tells us that what may seem impossible with man is possible with God. It may look like there is no hope, but if we do things His way, He will provide the way for you and your spouse to be reunited and for the sparks to fly like they once did. Watch for God's provision...don't step out of His will to chart your own way.

Gift #11: Perfect Joy: *“...you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”* Psalm 103 gives us the benefits God has bestowed upon us. We don't deserve any of these, but God has given them to us because He loves us. Maybe your spouse doesn't deserve your love right now, but what if we all got what we deserved? Let

your cup overflow with God's great joy and it will spill right over in your spouse's cup!

Gift #12: Perfect Care: *“surely, goodness, and mercy shall follow me...”* A pastor said one time, “We should rejoice always because goodness and mercy are following us 24/7. Goodness giving us what we don't deserve and mercy dying for something we do—Hell!” Hebrews 4:15-16 says we have a Savior who cares so much that He sits at His Father's right hand and makes intercession for us. Can you show your spouse this same goodness and mercy that God has shown to you?

Gift #13: Perfect Destiny: *“...and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”* This life is brief. God has promised a perfect destiny for all eternity with Jesus if we have accepted Him as Savior. I pray you've done that. If we can't hope in anything else, we can know that one day we'll spend eternity with Him. In that day there will be no more stormy marriages, no more struggles. There will only be an eternity praising the One who died for us.

You must choose whether or not you will open these 13 gifts straight from the Father's heart and allow God to use them. May you and your spouse find love, contentment, and joy as you celebrate anew your commitment to your marriage vows and your renewed commitment to God.

By Sharon Hawkins

peatedly when she followed His leading. Others might hire her to do quilting or she might receive another blessing in some unexpected way, many times the blessings were monetary. Mrs. Alene has learned that you can't “outgive” God. God has given her such a unique gift and she's using that gift for His glory.

God multiplies what we do for Him. You might not think of a quilt as a means for ministry. But, through this one quilt, he gave me a chance to share the good news of His love twice (once at the yard sale and now in this article). He blessed me with the awesome gifts of two amazing ladies, blessed the Ministry and comforted my weary, all at the same time!

My God is just such a Big God!! Romans 8:28 says that in all things God works for the good of those who love him. This time He chose to love me through a quilt and that's just quite alright with me!!!!

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.
1 Peter 4:10*



The Quilt

I love yard sales! My 9 year old, Bradley, and I love to go “yard saling” on Saturday mornings. He loves to rummage through other children's treasures. I love meeting people and sharing a common interest with a “yard saler” and that gives a perfect opportunity to share a Newsletter with them that tells about Jesus' love.

On one of these excursions, I bought, at a bargain yard sale price, a rare treasure—a beautiful quilt top that was hand sewn by a woman from Pakistan. I was amazed at the number of stitches that went into the quilt. My teenage son teased me because I just went on and on about how beautiful it was, about the amount of tedious work that went into it. It was a blessing to me to receive such a gift from a woman that I didn't know on the other side of the World who had put so much of herself into this quilt.

I took the quilt top to my friend at church, Mrs. Alene Owens, who does beautiful quilt work and I told her I wanted to hire her to quilt the back of it.

Fast forward to a couple of weeks ago...

To say I was having a hard time was an understatement. I was facing a crisis of crippling proportion. I had been praying that I would feel a touch from God to comfort my weary soul when my phone rang that Sunday afternoon. It was my precious friend, Mrs. Alene. She had finished the quilt. She told me that the Lord was leading her to donate the quilting to the Grace In The Wilderness Ministry. Whatever I wanted to pay her, I should give to the ministry. She said the ministry blessed her and she wanted to make a donation to bless me and others who would read the newsletter.

As I sat with her that evening and marveled at the thousands, maybe millions, of intricate stitches she had put into the back of the quilt to make it even more beautiful, I was reminded how God is sewing the masterpiece of my life one, sometimes painful, stitch at a time. God had used sweet Mrs. Alene to minister to my weary heart, to give me the touch from Him that I had been praying for.

Mrs. Alene told me that God often led her to do something for someone as a blessing, sometimes donating a quilt. Then every time God would and bless her re-



Keeping the Temple Fit: Size Yourself Up!

By Erin Lewis Of Curves

The number one complaint I receive from women at my club is, "I want to get rid of my belly!" This request mainly springs from a cosmetic viewpoint but these ladies are correct in feeling they need to get rid of belly fat. Belly fat is a *guaranteed* health indicator of various deadly diseases: heart attack, stroke, cancer and diabetes. Unfortunately for us, fat is easily stored in our mid-sections!

There are 3 important numbers you need to know about your body: your BMI; waist-to-hip ratio and body fat %. This

issue, we will discuss your BMI. **BMI (body mass index)** is a formula that takes into account your height and weight and gives you a good idea if you are healthy, overweight or obese. It will give you an idea of how much extra fat you are carrying. But, it doesn't take into account muscle mass or WHERE you are carrying extra weight, i.e.-your belly!

The formula is: *Multiply your weight in lbs by 703 and divide that number by your height in inches squared.* (Ex: A woman 5'5" & 180 lbs. 180 lbs x 703 = 126,540. Her height is 5'5" so that is 65

inches. 65 squared is 65 x 65 = 4,225. So, you divide 126,540 by 4,225 and her BMI is: 29.95. This indicates she is overweight and almost considered obese. A healthy BMI is 24 and below. 25-30 is overweight and 31+ is obese. Do this quick test and you will have your first important number! We will continue in the next GITW learning your other two important health numbers.

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: Comfort

By Jo Ann Case

The word brings images to mind. We speak of comfort food, something cold, something hot, a kiss, a comfortable chair or those comfortable old shoes. But, in recent years, comfort has taken on a whole new meaning for me.

Various definitions give us glimpses of comfort: To soothe in time of affliction or distress; relieve, ease, condition of well-being, contentment, solace in time of grief or fear; help, assist.

As a child, it was comforting to know that my parents were always there to provide for my needs. As a teenager, it was comforting to know my parents were there to push me towards the boundaries of the nest but also there to catch me upon falling. As a young parent, it was comforting to know my parents as Grandparents where the most trusted source of love and care for my children. As an older adult, it is comforting to be able to pick up the phone or drop by and use them as a sounding board.

My family recently spent some time behind a closed door in the ICU of our local hospital with a Palliative Care Nurse. This was a new word for me. I had to look it up. They help improve the quality of life of patients and their families facing a life-threatening disease. Another word for this is Comfort Care.

Listening to the nurse gently and patiently explain the coming days of watching my Dad slide into eternity from a terminal illness, I came to realize my siblings and I need to take a more active role in comforting my parents. That may mean running errands, cutting grass, household chores, picking up meals or simply being there.

Mother's Day and Father's Day have both

just passed and in July, we are hopeful that my parents will celebrate their 51st year of marriage. As I have watched the incredible care and comfort my Mother has provided to my Dad over the last few years, I am reminded of the verses in Philippians 2 that tell us to imitate Christ's humility and operate in tenderness and compassion. She has exemplified Christ's love in her care of my Dad.

I've watched as she has basically willed him to live after numerous close calls with his health. She has given life to his desire to be at home and cooked meals, washed sheets, turned him every two hours, bathed and changed him, shaved and cut his hair, and kept him from having the first bedsore. I was amazed as I watched her wash his hair. She doesn't short cut. She pulled him to the top of the bed, soaped up and washed his hair twice and then took a pan of water and rinsed it all away and proceeded to wash his face and neck with the same loving care. After that, the former construction worker was slathered up with cold cream and has the most beautiful skin. She does this every single day. She has stayed by his side in multiple hospital visits and grabbed snatches of sleep from a chair. They gain strength from Christian programming and music.

My Dad ran a successful construction business for years. I can only imagine that is has been quite difficult for him to lie in bed all day and look out the window at his former business. But, he has not complained and been an excellent patient. Nurses and doctors love him. My Dad spent the first 70 years of his life basically living it his way. He has spent the last few, graciously accepting his fate and enjoying being treated like a beloved baby. What a blessing!

Within the last month, I have also wit-

nessed a dear friend lose her husband to liver disease and yet another lose her son to a tragic motorcycle accident. The easy route is to shut off your emotions, make your excuses, avoid the pain. However, the more rewarding option is to embrace your family and friends. As the friend who just lost her husband reminded me, **pain shared is pain lessened.**

Having lost my husband to a senseless shooting in 2001, I know the pain of loss and I know the joy of comfort. Having received so great a comfort from others and our God, how can one not share in the pain of others through prayers, tears, kind words and good deeds. Our heavenly Father and our Savior Jesus are both acquainted with grief and offer us the most comfort of all – the promise of eternal life where they will wipe away all tears. Since we have been given so great a love and comfort, we can be a source of comfort and hope to others here on earth.

Who can you comfort today? Say a prayer, step up and step out in faith!

A simple internet search of scripture rendered over 70 hits for just the word comfort. This one stands out in my mind.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 (Psalm 86:15, 119:50, Matthew 5:4, 10:42)



The First Step

By Mary Beth Oxendine

December 2, 2007—We were facing our first Christmas without Tom. I knew this time was going to be so hard, both because of missing him and also because the time of year brought back the painful memories of that last Christmas with my dad. Oh, how I hurt for my children and myself!

The Christmas season was full of memories of Tom. December 7th (Pearl Harbor Day) was the anniversary of our first date. We ate hot dogs. Every year after that, we would eat hot dogs for dinner on that night, to remember.

God knew Tom was not going to be here for that anniversary, and he was so good to provide another memory that I'll always treasure. The weekend before Tom died, we had some dear friends over for a cookout at Tom's suggestion, and he wanted to have hot dogs and chili and hamburgers. So, Monday night, the night before Tom died, we had the leftovers, which meant that on our first date and our last night, we ate hot-dogs together!

God knew me so well—he knew that I would hang onto that sweet memory to get me through that difficult Tuesday.

The Scripture God used to touch my broken heart on the morning of Decem-

ber 2, 2007, was Exodus 33:12-14: "I know you by name...If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways, so I may know you and continue to find favor with you...My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

He was telling me that he hadn't forgotten me—He still knew my name and how I was hurting. He was telling me to continue on my journey to know Him more personally, to take the next step because this would please Him. Oh, how I wanted to please Him! He was telling me that He wouldn't leave us alone and He would still be with us during the holidays and anniversaries and every day in between!

After reading these verses, I realized that I needed to get my days back on a routine, and God gave me something to help me to continue living life in practical ways without my precious husband. I was reminded of a book I had been given at a homeschooling convention before Tom died called *Sink Reflections* by Martha Cilley, better known as The Flylady. I read the book and joined the email list on her website (www.flylady.com) One of the great things about the Flylady is her suggested morning and evening routines for homemaking and organized living. I started that day.

That night on the website, the Flylady

said: "Flybabies on the East Coast: It's 10:00, time for bed!" I cried. This was just what I needed: someone to tell me to do what I dreaded—going to bed without Tom.

This has been the hardest article to write, because I'm speaking about a huge struggle for every widower, widow, child who's lost a parent, parent who's lost a child, every divorced person, and every person who's lost a spouse. All of us ask the difficult question: How to take that first step that starts my life again when I feel like it is over?

I have wrestled with this question, but in Christ, I can answer it this way: I can't give up because as I walk this sad road I need to let the world know honestly but joyfully: "I miss my loved ones so very much! Life is so hard now—but I have a precious Savior who didn't do this to me but who will hold my hand and take me through the fire. Oh, how I love Him! For the rest of my days, I want to walk in His steps.

Psalm 37:23

If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.

By Kristin Propes



Content

"Content" ...yeah... that's pretty much how I would have described my life at that time.

Darryl and I had a good life with our 6-year-old son, Luke. Things seemed to be going smoothly and we were...well...content with the way things were.

That's before that day at the Endocrinologist's office when he got me thinking. I had been having some female problems and my body wasn't doing what it was supposed to do each month, if you know what I mean, and it hadn't for months. In the past, I had taken injections to help correct this problem.

The doctor said that it wasn't good for my body to continue not to have a cycle monthly. If we weren't planning to have any more children, he recommended that I begin taking medication to avoid any negative effects, like cancer. He gave me a prescription for birth control pills to

help regulate my system. I carried that prescription around for 3 months. Somehow, I just couldn't get a peace about getting it filled.

After the first 2 months had passed, Darryl and I were away and we talked about our family. We agreed that we were content (there's that word again) with our life, content with it being just the three of us. After six years, we had figured we could not have any more children. Luke was asking for a sister and I had let him know that you could not order them. :O)! Darryl and I felt that if we had one more child, great! If not, it just wasn't meant to be.

I was still praying about it that Wednesday night. That's when I decided to totally leave it in God's hands. I went to the altar. I told God my burden was His and I left it there. I truly did, along with all the worries that went with it—the issues of money, time, space, my health,

my age, my weight. All of it, I laid it down on the altar that night.

Three days later, God started answering my prayers. I started my cycle without drugs or injections and got pregnant in the same month. I took a pregnancy test and when we saw the positive result, we were ecstatic.

I went back to the Endocrinologist and he was very interested in what had happened. He didn't understand how this had happened in between visits. He asked me if I had had an injection or taken medication. I told him, "No, this was a God thing!" He didn't reply. I think he was kind of scratching his head.

In my next visit, two weeks later, the ultrasound revealed that I was carrying identical twins. The doctor told me that there was nothing separating them and that a number of terrible things could happen, like conjoining or twin transference and explained some of those risks. I

Content (Cont'd)

was blown away, to say the least! In one thought, I was worried about my babies surviving. The next, I wasn't sure I could handle twins. What about the expenses? What about the space in our home? What about my age? What about...? All the things that I had turned over to God were about one child, not two. Now, what would I do?

I'll never forget my dear friend, Valerie, taking me by the shoulders looking into my eyes and saying, "God is not surprised that you're carrying twins and He knows your situation! He'll take care of everything!" I needed that so much! Sometimes God knows we need to hear Him through a human voice and that's what Valerie was for me that day.

Two weeks later, I went back to the doctor and learned that one of the babies had died. I was devastated, I had just gotten used to the idea of twins and now that had changed that too. The doctor told me that he had no idea if the other baby would survive. We wouldn't know until I walked out of the hospital with a baby or not if it would make it. This was

a very scary time and I felt so helpless. I had to rely on God. Amazing how it's easier to have faith when you have nothing else, isn't it?

Then my doctor sent me back to my regular OB/GYN. At five months, they could not find the baby's heartbeat and they believed that the baby had died. As I waited for them to prepare for the ultrasound, I prayed and asked God to help me. I felt a warmth wash over me as if God put a warm coat around my shoulders and I felt His reassurance that He was taking care of me and my baby.

The instant they touched my stomach with the cold ultrasound, my baby jumped. It was an amazing feeling! God was taking care of us!

Then later on, during labor, the baby's blood pressure and heart rate dropped. They speculated that the umbilical cord was around the baby's neck so they needed to do an emergency delivery using forceps immediately. It had to be done by a doctor who was there on call at that particular time. Ironically, God had already brought my doctor down to the hospital and he had an excellent reputa-

tion for such deliveries. Once again, God was taking care of me and my baby!

My precious baby girl, Molly Kate, was born. Everyone in that room clapped and cheered. They were cheering because we didn't know the sex of the baby and we already had a boy—they were excited about my girl! We were cheering too! Not so much because of the sex of our precious angel but because of the amazing way God had brought her into our lives.

Every time I look back I'm reminded how I'm not in control of my life, how He is and how His amazing love always provides more than I could ever ask or think. When I try to do things in my own will and power, He reminds me that it has to be Him, not me! After all, what do I know? *I thought I was content!*

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.



Uranium in a Basement

Ever feel like you're stuck in a rut? That you're not making the difference you know you could? That "this little light of mine" is hidden under a bushel (whatever that means)?

Well, if anyone had the right to feel that way, it was Paul as he sat "wasting" away in prison. Whatever Paul had done 'pre'-jail, whether it was killing Christians, or leading people to Christ, he did it with passion. He made a difference—first for bad, then for good.

You see, one day he met Jesus on the Damascus Road and it made all the difference! He made a 180-degree turn and stopped chasing Christians to kill and he started chasing sinners to save. And...he was very good at it!

During his ministry, he was thrown in jail repeatedly. Even in jail, God used Paul in mighty ways as he wrote many of the books of the Bible. He was one of the greatest teachers who ever lived and much of his teaching was written from prison.

One time he was thrown in prison with his friend, Silas. They made the best of a bad situation and started praying,

singing and praising God. Acts 16:26 says, "Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose."

The jailer was so upset that he was ready to commit suicide because he thought the prisoners had escaped and he couldn't face his superiors. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" (Acts 16:28) Paul didn't leave! The jailer was overwhelmed by Paul's compassion. Then he was saved and so was his whole family. The jailer took them home to his house for a meal, then brought them back to jail. Paul didn't try to escape! The next morning, word was sent that they were free to go. Paul wanted to wait for the officials to come in person to free them. He still didn't leave!

He definitely practiced what he preached in 2 Corinthians 12:10. "For Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." Seems he was so delighted, he wanted to stay in prison.

But, how could he be so content in jail? Easy (easy to say, that is, not easy to do)—he was totally surrendered to God's perfect will for his life.

Prison walls, bars, chains and circumstances can be barriers for people, but not for God. He can use us to His full potential wherever we are and whatever circumstances we are in, if we will let Him. Whether it's a kind word of encouragement, a prayer for a hurting soul, an act of compassion, a helping hand or a shoulder to lean on, we can make a difference for Christ even if we are saddled by life's busyness, problems or trials.

A life surrendered is like uranium in a basement. It seeps through any barriers and out into the world around. God's love radiates like an uninterrupted power supply that flows on and on affecting everyone around. So the next time, you're feeling powerless, remember a surrendered heart with God living inside of it has power enough to light the whole world, even from a prison, or a basement!

Matthew 5:14

...Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.



Grace In The Wilderness Ministries

139 Commons Way
Greenville, South Carolina 29611

Sharon Hawkins Phone: 864-380-2358
Email: sharon@wildernessgrace.org

Marie Pritchett Phone: 864-979-5281
Email: marie@wildernessgrace.org

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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Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. Corrie Ten Boom

Grace In The Wilderness Ministries
139 Commons Way
Greenville, SC 29611