

GRACE IN THE WILDERNESS

A MINISTRY FOR TODAY'S BUSY WOMAN



I WILL EVEN MAKE A WAY IN THE WILDERNESS, AND RIVERS IN THE DESERT - ISAIAH 43:19



When You've Done All You Can, Stand

By Sharon
Hawkins

Well, there it was...! She was wondering just when it might happen... Things had been going so well. ...ANOTHER TRIAL... and, boy, this one was a doozy...!!!

Grace Ankles, Today's Busy Woman, has always heard that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, so surely eventually she would become the bionic woman, right?! If this trial had happened 10 years ago, *no 2 years ago*, she would have not been able to stand so strong. Now, Praise God, she's made of different stuff than when she began. That can only mean one thing—more of Him, less of her!

When she was a young girl, she thought she could stand through any problem, any burden. She could just cry it away into her pillow, work a little harder, drop the friend who was causing her the grief, avoid confronting her problem altogether, or get Mom to bail her out. As she grew older, she found out that it wasn't that simple. Her tears, hard work or even her Mom couldn't fix everything and refusing to confront her problems didn't make them go away, they just got worse.

Later on, Grace learned the hard way when she became broken by a divorce that she needed help to stand. She realized that life was so hard that she could not do it on her own. She needed a strength and a refuge that could only be found in Jesus.

She could imagine how the Children of Israel must have felt as they fled from Pharaoh's Army only to be cornered, *standing room only*, by the edge of the Red Sea. They panicked, yet all they could do was stand. *What a lesson they learned that day!* In Exodus 14:13, Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." Verse 21 says, Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. Not only did God hold back the sea but He did it 'all that night.' Whatever we need, He's there for us as much and as long as we need Him. "All that night," I love that!

Now many trials later, Grace's faith has become stronger, not because she is a stronger person, no, just the opposite. She has become weaker. She's learned that she is no match for the storms of this life, or for Satan for that matter, but through her trials, she's learned God is. Through her weakness, she's learned to stand on His strength, His Word, and His abundant provisions. She has learned that out of His great love for her, He has been working a plan

in her life from the moment she accepted Him as her Savior as a little girl!

This time... her knees hit the floor quicker because she has learned where her help comes from. *This time...* she immediately asked her friends and family to pray for her because she knows it makes all the difference.

This time... she grabbed her Bible, going straight to the promises in His Word because she's learned He's always faithful and she can gain strength to stand from His promises. *Promises like...He will never leave her or forsake her. Promises like...He's working all things together for her good. Promises like...He who started a great work in her will complete it. She just has to trust Him. Promises like...He has plans to prosper her and give her a hope and a future.*

This time... she kept on her armor of God because she's learned what it means to be in a spiritual battle. Ephesians 6:13 says, "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

This time... she didn't even try to take it on, she knew this trial was too heavy for her. Good thing she knows the One strong enough to hold back the Red Sea all that night. In fact, He's the same One who taught her how to stand there and watch Him part it.

September/October 2011

Volume 4, Issue 5, Bi-Monthly

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Watch for our
Grace In The
Wilderness
Conference for
Teens and College
Age Girls
October, 2011
Blue Ridge View
Baptist Church

Psalm 40:1-2

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.

Financially Speaking: Back to School—Blues or Blessings?

By Diana Kilgore



Edgar W. Howe once said, “If there were no schools to take the children away from home part of the time, the insane asylums would be filled with mothers.”

While we may laugh at that statement, the truth is we mothers experience a roller coaster of emotions when it’s time for our children to return to school after summer break.

Here are a few tips to help save money during back-to-school shopping:

Shop Online – Consider shopping for your supplies and clothing online. Compare the price of fuel to shipping costs and figure the savings. Some stores offer “site to store” services at no extra charge. This allows you to select your items and have them sent to one store closest to you. The Internet offers additional savings options such as E-bay and Craig’s List. By utilizing these services, you may find needed items at a significant discount.

Shop at One Store – Whether you shop online or use the advertisements from your local paper, remember to factor in the price of fuel. A ten cent savings on glue sticks doesn’t make much sense when it costs \$1.60 in fuel to drive to another store.

Recycle – If you have more than one child, you can reuse some supplies and accessories. Did you know that it is possible to graduate six children from high school with the same scientific calcula-

tor? That’s a minimum \$500 savings. Pass that backpack onto the next generation. I can personally vouch for JanSport – they do stand behind that lifetime guarantee. Think about it \$50-\$60 one time purchase or \$20 -\$25 for a new backpack every year.

Pack Your Lunch – Choosing to pack a lunch over purchasing lunch at the school is one of the biggest savings available. By packing a lunch, you can insure your child is eating healthy, allow them to choose foods you know they like and will eat, and save money by buying in bulk.

Besides saving money, we can use this back-to-school shopping opportunity to teach our children some life lessons along the way.

Shop Online – This method allows extra time to consider your purchases and teach your children to shop wisely and avoid impulse buying while waiting a day or two for delivery. By allowing the children to take part in the purchase decision they will also feel a sense of accomplishment. Best of all, these decisions can be made at home instead of arguing up and down the aisles of your local department store.

Shop at One Store – By shopping at one location, our children will learn to make lists and stick to them. This is a valuable tool that many of us implement on a daily basis. The children will also become conscious of the time and money savings.

Recycle – By recycling we are helping eliminate waste, dangerous chemicals and pollution that are ruining our environment. We are also saving money and

teaching our children that “brand new” is not a necessity. This principle may help them avoid debt problems in the future. Don’t toss old binders, decorate them instead and personalize them. Save those old spiral notebooks and use the remaining paper.

Pack Your Lunch – By packing their own lunch, children learn how to eat healthy and take a personal interest in their meal preparation. This will help them with their health and independence in the future. Lunchboxes have come a long way through the years. Let your children decorate or embroider theirs to make it unique.

While applying some of these tips, focus on individuality. Remind your children that they are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Each child is unique and created to glorify God in a particular way. There is no reason to buy the same backpack or t-shirt as everyone else to blend in with a crowd when God created us with differences for His purpose. Their identity should have a better foundation than colorful fibers or brand names. Take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to prepare your children to live the life God created for them... and don’t forget to have fun along the way.

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.



Titus 2 Wisdom for Women:

Fruits of the Spirit—Long Suffering “Patience”

By Verna Mae Abercrombie

When Sharon asked me to write something for her “Grace” newsletter on long suffering, I thought, “Me?, I’m a very impatient person.” “What is God trying to teach me?” Patience.

When I think of long suffering, I think of Galatians 5:22-23. When we are God’s child, the Holy Spirit teaches us how to be totally dependent upon the Lord, which then, produces an overflow of

love, joy, peace, long suffering, “patience”, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control in us.

We can’t produce these qualities on our own. They are from God, but when we completely rely on the Lord and obey the promptings of His spirit, the fruits of the spirit—all nine; they flow from us freely and draw others to Him.

Not only long suffering, but all nine aspects of grace are to be manifested in every believer, following the example of our Lord. We learn long suffering as we go through hard times.

When we submit to God, the Holy Spirit will enable us to accept trouble or pain even for long periods of time. He will also help us to endure wrong things others do unto us.

Fruits of the Spirit: Long Suffering "Patience" (Cont'd)

By Verna Mae
Abercrombie

In my younger years, I prayed almost 20 years for my husband before he accepted Christ. It took long suffering and patience. But when he passed away nine years ago, he was faithful in church and teaching Sunday school. Don't ever give up, folks, God still answers "knee-mail."

We are all human and sometimes very impatient. "Lord, I want this and I want it right now!" But by being patient and waiting upon the Lord, He sees ahead and works all things out for our good and according to His will. We should then give him all the praise, honor and glory.

I've learned to be patient in God's timing here in our church at Blue Ridge View. Different outcomes worked out through many prayers and in God's own timing. I've been a Christian for 70 years, saved and baptized at the age of 12. I feel the keys are prayer, effort and patience. In God's timing, He answers prayer. Just recently since going to two morning services at our church, many of us had encouraged and invited others to be part of our choir. We prayed for God to fill our choir and he

did in His own timing. We too learned to wait on God. Just look at God's blessings on our choir with Brother Andrew directing us!

Ladies, we must be slow to take offense. We're not born with a lot of patience, and the Holy Spirit has to give us patience.

When we accept Christ as our Savior, that very moment, the sweet Holy Spirit comes into our hearts. I think of the Spirit as my helper and patience as an attribute of God. His word is all about His nature and His character. Because of His patience, the second coming of Christ has not yet taken place. He is not slow in keeping His promise; He is patient not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

Have you ever had days when life seemed to come unglued because of the little things? I have! The Holy Spirit can help all of us bear the little trials and annoyances of life with calmness and serenity. Don't take another pill, pray to be long suffering and patient.

The story is told of a certain devout maiden who asked for help in cultivating

the grace of patience. Well, the helper gave her a poor widow as a companion who was cross, irritable, unkind, unloving, intolerable and constantly complaining. The maiden then had every opportunity she needed to practice patience.

Our lives go through many seasons of change. Some changes are exciting, some make us anxious. Change is a fact of life and there is nothing we can do about it but accept it and trust that if God brings us to it, God will get us through it.

For all of us Grace Ladies, when fulfilling our purpose seems tough, we can't give in to discouragement. Remember our reward which will last forever.

My prayer for you is when your life comes to an end, people can say, "She served her Lord. She reached people for Jesus Christ". The mission isn't easy but don't give up. The rewards are beyond anything you could imagine.

Psalm 40:1
I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

He Knows Me By Name

By Brenda Horne

I'm writing this before we know what the Lord will answer. Tomorrow we will know.

My sister is no stranger to fear. She is a registered nurse at the Children's Medical Center of Georgia. She sees fear daily in the eyes of children who do not understand the procedures they must endure while they fight illnesses that may take their lives.

She knows the fear of losing a loved one as she came face to face with death the day our father lost his battle with cancer. But tomorrow she must withstand a fear that frightens her to the core.

Tomorrow my sister must sit in a courtroom before a judge, a mortal man, and have him decide the fate of her young daughter. She must try to convey to the judge the wrongs that have occurred. She knows if the truth does not surface and the judge does not intervene then her daughter will face the consequences and it could be devastating.

As she thinks of the courtroom, the

judge, the lawyers and the lies she must confront; she realizes, aside from telling the truth and prayer, there is absolutely nothing she can do to protect her daughter from the monster in her life.

My sister knows the Lord Jesus Christ and He knows her, she is a strong woman of faith but even *her* faith falters when her child is endangered. She prays "Lord, What if it goes horribly wrong in the courtroom tomorrow? What if the judge believes the lies? What if...?"

These thoughts invade her mind and she is panic-stricken. Being crushed by burden and dread, she bows her head and prayerfully lays her daughter at the feet of Jesus, trembling she cries before her Savior...I'm afraid!

What happened next humbled her to her very soul. After her prayer, she lifted her Bible and felt God pause the universe as He took her heart into His Almighty hands. The very next verse took her aback. This is what she read..

..... Sharon. *They shall see the glory of*

the Lord, the excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, be strong and do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God, He will come and save you. Isaiah 35:2-4

My sister's name is SHARON.

What we thought would be a one day ordeal has lasted much longer. It has been over a month since my sister went to court. She is just now getting the judge's ruling, and it is not good. He has not ruled in her favor. The future for my niece is terrifying and my sister is crumbling.

I spoke with her on the phone as she wept over what her lawyer told her. It seems that no one believes her or my niece. The judge believed the lies. My sister sobs as she tells how she and her daughter have done nothing wrong. Her words are haunting as she cries that she is only trying to protect her daughter from any further abuse. I wept with her.

He Knows Me By Name (Cont'd)

By Brenda Horne

As we gather ourselves, we turn to the truth of God's Word. I ask her, "What exactly do you believe?" She tells me of her Savior who promises to lift the heads of those who love Him, and how good comes to those who trust in the Lord, according to His purpose. She weeps as she explains that God is Her Redeemer and how He lives so that we may live. She believes with her whole heart despite the fear that looms in her.

Two more months pass after that phone call. When the final papers are signed, they are still not in my sister's favor.

My sister's life should have crashed around her that day... yet this time... there were no tears, no uncontrollable sobs, the fear had subsided and was replaced by the peace that passes all understanding. Only God could perform such a miracle. He replaced her fear with His hope, her weakness with His strength.

My sister does not know God's plan, but she does know God. She knows His promises will hold true and His Word will not return void, because way back in March He called her by name and told her so.

Isaiah 43:1...Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; **I have called you by name; you are mine!**

Isaiah 55:11-12

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

"For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace..."

We Were Soldiers? (A Tribute to Joshua Pritchett)

By Larry D. Mason

Friday evening on July 01, 2005 was a typical evening around our household. My wife retired to the bedroom to get a good night's rest. Shortly thereafter, my daughter came in from her date around 11:00 p.m. I was watching the movie, "We Were Soldiers," starring Mel Gibson. A popular movie was based on the first United States ground troops in the central plains of Vietnam. The movie was a late movie on TBS, so I was planning to watch the entire movie, you know in between my "cat" naps, in the old easy chair. In the movie, the Vietnamese were overrunning the troops on all fronts. The commander, Mel Gibson, with no other options to defense informs headquarters to invoke: Broken Arrow!

Apparently, this command, Broken Arrow, is a last ditch option to save your troops from an all out massacre.

Suddenly, the telephone rings. I knew it was late for a telephone call, noting the time: 1:03 a.m. I hate late telephone calls. Hoping the caller has the wrong number, I reach for the phone and the caller identification window notifies me, the caller is my father-in-law.

With a heavy burden in his voice, Tom says: "How ya doing, Larry?" I responded with the following: "What's the matter, Tom?" A grandfather, Tom, proceeds in telling me the worst kind of news! His only grandson, Josh, is dead. The details were somewhat sketchy, but Josh had apparently lost control while driving a car, resulting in a crash that cost him his life.

Reluctantly, I awaken my wife and

daughter with bad news. Listen to me when I tell you this, there is no easy way to deliver this kind of tragedy to your loved ones. This type of news is like being sucker-punched right in the gut. There are no ginger words to express tragedy. Try as you may, you will have a lump in your throat when delivering this type of news.

After we gather our emotions, we are in route to my brother-in-law's home, located in Pickens, SC. The time is about 2:20 a.m. when we arrive at their home. Disbelief is the first emotion we encounter with the immediate family. The question, WHY? Of course, there is no answer to this repetitive question. Over, over, and over again the question runs through your mind, WHY?

We left their home around 6:40 a.m. on Saturday morning. The next 72 hours are long and arduous. The funeral director estimated over 2,000 visitors during visitation.

July 04, 2005 we bury Josh, our nephew. A twenty-year-old young man, our Josh. I think of Josh with these thoughts: a life lived, but not fully lived; dreams not fully dreamed; hopes and aspirations of two parents not fulfilled; and a young sister who longs to see her only brother. Josh, such a vibrant, beautiful young man and so full of life. Josh, how we love you and miss you so very much.

As parents, we always assume that we will die before our children. In the natural order of things I guess that thought seems about right. It seems, when a young person dies it is a death out of

season. However, it is human folly to assume anything about death. As a small child, I remember my father once said: "Death knows no age nor time of day." I have thought about that statement quite a bit as of late. When you lose a loved one to death, you will find out what you believe and why you believe in a certain thing. The death of a loved one resounds our own mortality and makes us realize we are human, indeed!

With regard to the question, WHY? I heard many people offer an endless supply of condolences, thoughts, and prayers to the bereaved parents and sister. Empathy is a nice thought, but it does not mend a heart that is broken into two separate pieces. As a family member, I realized we were overrun on all emotional fronts with this untimely death.

I cried to God: Broken Arrow; Broken Arrow; Broken Arrow! At first, there was only silence from God, then I awoke one morning about 3:00 a.m. with this thought from the apostle, John 6:67-69. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Then Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

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*Larry D. Mason is the author of **Casting Your Net: Eternal Things**; this book may be reviewed and purchased at the Barnes & Noble Booksellers store by website. <http://productsearch.barnesandnoble.com/search/results.aspx?store=BOOK&WRD=casting+your+net>*



Mad At Mickey

By Brenda Horne

I sat in my recliner, starring angrily at the Mickey Mouse figurine perched on the shelf next to my fireplace.

Last year my family and I were able

to go on a fun-filled, action-packed vacation to Disney World but not this year. This year we sit in the midst of a huge financial crisis. When the economy fell, so did my husband's business and now we are at the brink of disaster.

I glared at Mickey as he taunted me. I wondered why we were facing such a hardship. Here we are, as the saying goes, "robbing Peter to pay Paul" just to survive (and that was not working well at all) plus we are stranded at home instead of visiting the "Happiest Place on Earth." It's just not fair!

We are not frivolous, flamboyant people, always buying and spending then wondering where the money went. All I

want is a family vacation, a time to make memories with my kids again this year, that's all. I hated that Mickey Mouse figurine; sitting there reminding me of what I couldn't have.

I'm ashamed to say this story is true. That day my spoiled, bratty self was showing its ugly side in a major way! My husband had to bring me back to the responsible adult I'm supposed to be (I hate when he does that!) He had the nerve to say, "But Brenda, the Lord allowed us the opportunity to go last year. And we had an awesome time. Can't you be grateful for that?"

At this point I wondered if throwing myself on the floor, kicking and screaming would change anything. (I decided against that method.) So I sat there, scowling at Mickey. "Was I really being ungrateful?" And "Why wasn't my husband somewhere killing bugs for me instead of in here making me look at my true reflection?"

As Mickey stood there unchanged by my icy stare, my frown slowly faded when

my mind ventured back to the laughter and excitement we shared at Disney World. I paused to remember what the Lord has done for us. And to truly give thanks for the memories we made...last year.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

Even if the fig tree does not bloom and the vines have no grapes, even if the olive tree fails to produce and the fields yield no food, even if the sheep pen is empty and the stalls have no cattle — even then, I will be happy with the Lord. I will truly find joy in God, who saves me.



Going All The Way To Calvary

By Celeste Hebert

It's not often possible to walk in someone else's shoes and experience precisely what another person feels and thinks. But if it happens, we have a glimpse of what he is going through at the time.

I held my patient's upper arm as I walked beside him for his mile-long stroll. With the progression of Parkinson's, his arm shakes most of the time. A few minutes into the exercise, his tremors increased. His respirations were normal, and he wasn't short of breath. Since he was in good shape, and I'm a fairly healthy individual, I maintained my grip on him as we continued down the lane.

As his quivering intensified even more, I kept a stronger hold on him. My own arm vibrated with his for the rest of the promenade and trembled together as one for over thirty minutes.

Reaching the house, my arm was numb and weak. But I only experienced for a few minutes what he feels all day long

with his disease. I'd been sort of walking around in his shoes, but could in those brief moments understand why he often lost the strength in his limbs, became tired easily and fell asleep without warning. If my limbs involuntarily shook from morning until bedtime, I'd be exhausted, too.

If we can for just a little bit of time put ourselves in someone else's shoes and feel his suffering, we understand some of it. But unless we've been there, it's difficult to comprehend, even harder to empathize what another goes through in his life, family and health. Even then, if we've had a similar experience it's never the same as being that individual. For each of us in our unique composition has exclusive senses, feelings and views so we can never truly put ourselves in another person's place.

It's good if we can walk in someone else's shoes for a brief time. Then we have an idea of what that individual may be going through and can more easily empathize with the person's condition or situation. In the long run, only Jesus

Christ has put himself in our place for any length of time and truly knows how we feel in every situation. Jesus Christ came to earth in the form of man and comprehends what we face. 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his stripes you have been healed."

Jesus is the only one who fully understands what we go through and suffer because He took our place when He came to earth to die for us. Let's thank the Lord for the brief reminders he gives us to walk in someone else's shoes. And praise our Lord Almighty for sending His Son who carried our sins in his body and walked all the way to Calvary for us. Amen.

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.



Flowers

By Amanda Seawright

As little girls and women, I think it would be safe to say, we are all like flowers

whether it be the little purple flowers that start popping up when Spring is near or a beautiful rose. They make us smile. We are like flowers.

Some of us are precisely planted in a garden and some of us grow wild but we are all beautiful. God is like the Rich Soil that our roots grow way down deep into. He is the Rain, the Water in the Gardener's Can and the Gardener Himself. If we let our roots grow way down deep and let Him nurture us with His love, His mercy and His Holy Word, we

will grow stronger and beautiful. We will become His precious, prized flower whether we're a wild flower or rose.

If we don't give our lives to Christ and study our Bibles, surround ourselves with people who are Christians and love the Lord, we will be like the flowers that have been picked or cut. Those flowers don't have the rich soil or the nice cool water or the Gardener to take care of them so they die.

If we let the World and their views take us over, we become like the uprooted unwatered, unattended flowers.

So my dear Christian ladies and girls, let's dig our roots way down deep into God's soil and let Him water us with His love, compassion and guidance and be all we can be for our Lord and Savior!

Psalms 1:3

He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.



Mom, it is time to take a stand for our children! [Join OneMillionMoms.com](http://Join_OneMillionMoms.com) today! Help us recruit others who share our concern and are willing to get involved in the fight for the future of their children. Think of the influence we can have and all we can accomplish by banding together!

Stubborn As A Mule

By Debbie Reeves

When I was a child, my mother took me, my sisters and my brother to church. My dad worked out of town a lot and he went some when he was home. He got very sick when I was nine and had to be put in the hospital. He was having severe stomach problems. He died a few days later in the hospital.

My mother had four children to support. My oldest sister had just married and my mother later remarried and we didn't go to church any more. My stepdad was very controlling and abusive to my mother and to all of us. Right after they married, we moved away from family and friends. My mother had two more children (brothers). My stepdad treated us differently than he did my stepbrothers. I loved my mother, sisters and brothers, but I couldn't wait to get away from home and my stepdad. I begged my mother to let me get married when I was 16. She finally gave in.

My mother wanted our home life to change, but every time she tried to stand up to my stepdad, he would take my two little brothers and leave for a few days. My mother would cry until they came home. Anyway, I thought if I could get married, it would be better.

I knew before I got married that my husband drank a lot on weekends. He was only eighteen but he had a problem with alcohol. His father was an alcoholic. When we had been married only a week, he came home late at night. He had been drinking. We got into an argument and he hit me. I was shocked because he had never hit me before. This happened over and over. We were evicted many times because, when he would come home, we would get into fights.

I wanted to have a happy family, but everything was a mess. He would stay gone sometimes for days. So I thought I might as well do whatever I wanted. I would go out with two of my sisters and have fun. But inside I was miserable. Then when I was eighteen, I found out that I was going to have a baby. I was so happy, I thought things would finally change.

My husband went to rehab but he didn't stay as long as he was supposed to. When our daughter was born we were so proud, but things were still not good. I needed to get on my knees and turn to God. But I thought I could fix things myself. I left a few times, but I always came back. Finally, when my little girl was three, I knew I had to do better for her.

I got married again when my daughter was four and a half. Things were going well. Then my daughter's dad died in a fire on her sixth birthday. He was only 26 years old. I had been remarried for over a year, but it was still devastating. Not too long after that I had a baby boy. I wanted to teach my children right, but we still didn't get in church. My children went to church with my sister-in-law and her husband. We went sometimes, but not regularly. Then my husband got saved when my children were six and eleven, and we started going to Blue Ridge View Baptist Church. We went on Sundays, but not on Wednesdays.

Then my mother died suddenly in a car accident in 1991. It was a terrible loss. I was really close to my mama. I was still not saved, but I know it was the prayers of others that got me through it. My mama always told me I was stubborn. I thought my marriage was good, we were taking the kids to church and things were going okay. But, I was still relying on self—not God. Romans 8:8 says that those that are in the flesh cannot please God. I continued going to church.

I started questioning if I had really been saved. Finally in a revival one night, I felt convicted and felt God speaking to me to make things right. I went home and I was miserable. The next day I got on my knees and made things right with God. I was worried at first about what others would think of me at church. But God helped me to see it's what He thinks that really matters. When my mama used to call me stubborn, it would make me mad. She would say "You're stub-

born as a mule." But pride and self only put me in bondage. True freedom comes only from God. Christ came to set us free.

Thank God He loved me enough to not give up on me. Satan wants us to buy into the lie, that we don't need God, that we're doing pretty good on our own. That we can put off making a decision for the Lord another day.

I regret waiting so long before admitting my need for the Lord. Ephesians 2:8

says that by grace are we saved through faith, not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. We are not promised tomorrow.

If you have not accepted Christ, please don't put it off. I am so thankful for all that God has done for me. I am so thankful for my family. I pray each day that God will save my three precious grandsons, while they are young and that they will live for Him. I want to live a life that pleases God and not put off until tomorrow what He wants me to do today.



A Garden In The Wilderness: My Turn

By Sharon Hawkins

As Dr. Edenfield, my oncologist, entered my examining room, his quick, crooked smile told me instantly that he remembered my face. He remembered me from all the visits the three years he and my sweet mother battled her cancer so fiercely together. She finally beat it just across the Jordan River on March 9, 2008.

Cheerfully he said, "I remember you!" In an effort to lighten my own anxiety and also to let him know I remembered him fondly for all he had done for my mom, smiling back I nervously replied, "It's my turn." Just weeks before it had been devastating to me and my family when we learned on June 8 that it was my turn to battle this deadly disease—cancer—this vile poison from the pits of hell.

For three years I watched cancer torture my mom's body and mind until she couldn't fight it any more. Now I was being diagnosed with it almost 20 years her junior. It was calling me into the ring. It was my turn to fight. And, boy, was I mad at it!!!! It took my mom from me and I was determined it wasn't taking my children's mom from them!!!!

My breast cancer was not my mom's breast cancer. Mom had a lumpectomy and radiation. Later, Mom developed colon cancer and that is the cancer that took her life. With our increased family history after her death, my breast cancer required a bilateral mastectomy and reconstruction.

Mom struggled with chemo, radiation, hair loss and sickness. I'm struggling with the months of emotional and physical pain of losing my breasts.

As hard as that is, Praise God, today the

doctor confirms the good news—no radiation, no chemo!! I only have to take a hormone therapy drug for 5 years.

My battle has been different. I will be well after the 6-8 months of reconstruction procedures. The doctor told me that he really considers me cancer free right now. Praise God! Praise God! Praise God!

You know I really thought I was fighting cancer with my mom. I carried her burden, I laid in the floor at night crying out to God pleading for Him to heal her, I shaved her head, I cared for her body, I encouraged her, I went to doctor visits and I held her hand as she slipped off to meet Jesus. But now I realize that it's not the same as when it's your body being attacked. Bless her heart! I understand now more on a deeper level just a small part of what she experienced. I long for the day when I can tell her face-to-face in heaven that, with God's help, we beat this dreadful disease that tortured her so much. Somehow, though, I think she already knows ;o)!

As my husband and I left the oncologist's office that day and walked out the front door of the Cancer Center, I wondered what the percentage was of people who had such good news as I had had after their first visit with the oncologist. I was sure it was very low. I had been blessed beyond words.

When we reached the parking garage, Scott and I held each other for the longest time and sobbed out loud. We were celebrating God's grace and thanking Him, our hearts were overflowing with joy for this amazing gift. The gift of our life together—one we had taken so for granted just a couple of months before. It was as though for the first time we

were realizing how precious it was and what a great blessing we were just given! I know those in the cars passing by were wondering which one of us just got the bad news that we were dying. I'm so thankful they were wrong...God's grace...God's mercy...

We never know what illnesses other people might be facing and we never know when it's going to be our turn. Unless Jesus comes back to get us first, we will all have to face illness and death and no one else can face it for us. One minute, we may be healthy enjoying all life has to offer, the next minute our health may be gone and we're struggling to raise our head for a sip of water. Sometimes, our burdens seem harder than we can bear. But there is One who is always faithful, always merciful, always loving, and always there for us and His grace is always enough, especially when it's our turn.

I am so thankful the Lord has blessed me with a second chance by giving me my life back. I gladly give it right back to Him. He has been so good to me! That's the least I can do! Soon my sickness will be behind me and the Lord's work will be before me. I can't wait! We have to make a difference for Him while we are able.

If we are His, in love, He'll either heal us here or heal us in heaven. He'll always be there for us in a way no one else ever could, especially when it's. our turn!

2 Corinthians 12:9
But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."



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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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Sometimes being right and being right with God are two different things. -Anonymous

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