

# 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



### A Marriage Made in Heaven

The Bible says in Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

Just the other day Grace, Today's Busy Woman, overheard her friend say, "If my husband loved me like Christ loved the church, I would bow down and kiss his feet." Grace sighed. She had to admit she allowed herself to doubt her husband Tom's love for her too sometimes.

When she and Tom first married, they were so in love. They had so much passion and sometimes it would ignite into arguments. They always kissed and made up. Since then they have been through so much—hard financial times, almost losing their house, almost losing each other, job changes, care giving for their parents through illness, struggles raising their children, just to name a few.

And, three kids later, she just doesn't feel as beautiful to her husband anymore. When they go out, she often tries to make herself beautiful for him. Most of the time lately, he doesn't seem to notice. At least if he does, he doesn't say so. She wants to say something to him about it but usually doesn't because she doesn't want to start a fight or let him know her insecurity.

Men and women are so different. You know, that "men are from Mars, women are from Venus" thing! Isn't it true that women think things are going well in a relationship when they are talking about it? And, men

think things are going bad when you have to talk about it?

Communication is paramount in a marriage. Marriage is like a bank account. If we're going to make withdrawals, we'd better be making deposits or the account will be depleted, putting the relationship in serious trouble. Little problems need to be dealt with before they become big problems. The four A's of getting along with a husband: Accept, Adapt, Admire, Appreciate.

All marriages need consistent nurturing. But sometimes it's okay to fight, as long as we're fighting for our marriages!

Satan is attacking our marriages like never before. He knows that a husband and wife who are one in the Lord will be able to fulfill God's will on earth and are a mighty force to be reckoned with, especially if they are also raising their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. He will do anything he can to tear them and the whole family relationship down.

To be the best as a couple, we have to be our best as an individual. We each need our own personal relationship with the Lord and to pray for our husbands. It's unfair to rely on them to meet all our needs, to make us happy. We've got to cut them a little slack after all they are just men, not God!

We also have to remember, we can't be God to our husbands. That role is already filled. But often we may have

to forgive, then forgive and forgive them again like God does. Of course, that goes for our husbands having to forgive us too again and again.

It's a good thing that when Grace and Tom married, they invited Christ to be a part. With Christ in a marriage, it's like a solid braided rope with three parts—husband, wife and God.

That way when the storms of life whip the rope and stretch it to the max, it doesn't break and it doesn't easily come unraveled but holds securely through the hardest stresses of life.

The other secret of Grace and Tom's marriage is that they truly have loved each other from the very start. James C. Dobson said, "Don't marry the person you think you can live with; marry only the individual you think you can't live without." They did and while their marriage is not perfect (no marriage is), during the hardest times, that love has survived, grown and become more comfortable. Maybe that's why Tom doesn't feel like he always needs to tell her she's beautiful. Sometimes Grace needs to give him a gentle reminder (*yeah, right upside his head :O!*).

Our husbands were appointed by God to be the spiritual leaders of our homes. Our place is to support them. And that "submission thing", well, it's not so bad if you really think about it ... Look at it this way—Dr. Tony Evans said, "Submission is knowing how to duck so God can hit your husband." *Pretty cool, huh? ...*

By Sharon Hawkins

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**Song of Solomon 6:3**

*I am my beloved's  
and my beloved is mine...*



# Financially Speaking: Financial Consolidation

By Diana Kilgore

**When confronting your financial situation, I recommend that you first consider five important areas and remember, YOU ARE MORE THAN JUST YOUR FINANCES!!**

**Believe the Truth about Yourself:** Don't underestimate your ability. A spiritual view of yourself will help you overcome and self-impose limitations. Read Psalm 139:14-15.

**Discover the Blueprint for your success:** There is a prearranged blueprint with your name on it. You can live that design by submitting yourself to the will of God. You may have a bumpy road, but God can work it all together for your good. Read Psalm 139:16.

**Play by the Rules:** God wrote His laws on our hearts. Doing business ethically is a matter of adhering to a system of moral values. Don't do in private what you wouldn't want revealed in public. Read Micah 6:8.

**Check Yourself:** Get rid of practices you know aren't right. Know your limitations and shortcomings. Read I John 1:8-10.

### Love Others

Live in unity and cultivate relationships. Read Ecclesiastes.4:9-10.

**To move forward with a plan to improve your financial situation, you must first have an accurate view of your credit:** Experian, TransUnion, and Equifax are the three major credit bureaus whose information will shape your credit future. It is important to

check these bureaus at least once a year to verify your credit report is accurate. Statistics show that 79% of the information is incorrect .

You can also check [www.myFico.com](http://www.myFico.com) to find out what your credit score is. Scores range from 300-850 with the average being 678. The formula that determines your credit score is broken down as follows: 1) Payment history – 35%; 2) Amount of outstanding debt – 30%; 3) Length of credit history – 15%; 4) New credit – 10%; and 5) Types of credit.

**Here are a few ideas that may sound like a good way to help your financial situation but when we look a little more closely, we realize they aren't.**

**Refinancing:** Origination fees (on \$100,000, \$3000 origination fees – that means three years of paying \$1000 in interest just to recoup fees). Only refinance from an adjustable rate to a fixed rate; or refinance a fixed rate only if you can save 1.5 – 2%.

**Settlements:** Can be good but be aware that the balance will be reported on a 1099-C (cancellation of debt) and must be claimed as income on your personal tax return. Usually benefit (as low as 10% settlement) is worth way more than the tax liability.

**Retirement withdrawals:** If you're under age 59½ you will have a 10% penalty. Taxes must be paid on additional income. Sometimes, depending on the amount withdrawn, you bump up into a higher tax bracket. You must balance tax liability

with interest savings.

**If, after prayerfully considering your financial situation, you feel bankruptcy is your only option, I recommend filing a Chapter 13 as opposed to Chapter 7.** This way you pay back the debt you owe but you have the court on your side to make it affordable. Main thing is to learn from your mistakes and try to not repeat them. Dave Ramsey filed bankruptcy at age 26 but look at how he has used that situation to help others. On the other hand, others filing bankruptcy repeatedly may be abusing the system. Some verses to reflect on: Deuteronomy 15:1-2, Psalm 37:21, Ecclesiastes 5:5.

**Take advantage of some local resources if you are having problems keeping up with your house payments:** Call (864) 631-2014 Erin Murphy ([erin@nhcgreenville.org](mailto:erin@nhcgreenville.org)) or Misty Rae ([misty@nhcgreenville.org](mailto:misty@nhcgreenville.org)). Unemployed or Under-employed programs or Life Event (death, divorce, catastrophe): Can pay mortgage payment for 6, 12, or 24 months (\$36,000 max). If you live in the house for 5 years, never repay. If you sell the house before 5 years and make a profit, they prorate repayment. If you sell the house at a loss before 5 years, debt forgiven.

### STAY MOTIVATED!

Many people say motivation is temporary—well so are eating and bathing, but if you do both regularly, you will live longer and smell better. **Remember you are more than your finances!!!**

## Titus 2 Wisdom for Women: Open Letter From Christian Guys



Ladies, could we talk to you right out of our hearts for a few minutes? It is awkward for us to talk about something like this, in person, so we thought we would write our feelings. We are saved men and baptized in the Holy Spirit. We desperately want to live for Christ and not follow the ways of the world.

We know that women and men are affected differently, so since we desperately want to follow hard after God, could we kindly and respectfully ask you to help us with a few things? We realize that women are primarily stimulated or turned on by "touch." Did you know that guys are turned on by "sight?" Let us explain. When we see women who are

dressed in a suggestive, revealing, provocative, teasing, tantalizing manner, our sexual desires are aroused. Our bodies are then affected. To be absolutely candid, let us give you some examples.

If you are wearing a blouse that barely meets the waist of your slacks and some of your skin shows while you are moving around, or simply while you are walking, sitting, or kneeling, our minds are geared to wonder what more of your body would look like further up....This causes our bodies to respond biologically, and suddenly we are fighting a war in our minds and bodies. And that war of lust is continuing often long, even hours, after you are gone. We hate this, because our

"righteous man" wants to think pure thoughts....When you wear low-cut tops which are in any degree revealing, or when you bend over, and they are revealing, this again causes us big problems in the flesh. Or if the back is out of your top, we automatically think that you do not have the undergarment on, and the Spirit and the flesh begin to fight again. Or when we see any glimpse of your undergarments, such as straps, we have trouble. What we are trying to say is this: If it is not for sale, don't advertise it. We really feel that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit speaks to you and nudges you when it is too tight, too short, too low, or too revealing. Will you listen to that voice?

## Open Letter From Christian Guys (Cont'd)

For the Scripture says, "Quench not the Spirit." 1 Thess. 5:19.

Girls, do you know what we would really like? We would like to come among our Christian sisters and not have to fight and struggle in the flesh. We do not need to have to wrestle in the flesh at church or at church activities. We men, whether young, old, single or married, are faced with this every day among women of the "world." But we would like to have rest in our Spirit man when we come among Christian girls. We are the church, not the world. The fact is, if your heart is pure,

your outward appearance will be modest. Women can be fashionable and modest at the same time. To be honest, we respect you more when your appearance is modest, as the Scripture commands in 1 Timothy 2:9.

We really do not want the kind of girl who dresses provocatively, for we know that if we marry her, she will still be that way in the presence of other men. We know that we have responsibilities toward ladies, too. We must be careful to portray ourselves properly. We must treat you like ladies. If we are really committed Christian guys, we will strive

to treat you like Jesus would. After all, you are daughters of God.

Thank you, dear Christian sisters, for hearing our hearts on this subject. Once we have conveyed the truth of the matter to you, you become responsible before God for what you do with the truth. We really are "our brother's keeper." Genesis 4:9. We know that there is a "cult of conformity" in our generation, but we as Christians "march to the beat of a different drummer." Please, ladies, do not say, "I don't care," but help us in these last days to live as close to Jesus as we can. Thank you so much, Christian Guys

## A Garden in the Wilderness:

### Living Under House Arrest—A Caregiver's Story

By Linda Byce

I'm so tired.

I have had 25 nights of sleep in 62 months.

25 Glorious Nights that I could lay my head down and know I don't have to get up every 3 or so hours to check my husband's diaper, make sure he's covered up and make sure he is still breathing. "I am a different kind of widow."

It breaks my heart to think of all the other caregivers out there going through the same thing—living under house arrest.

My Nightmare began on Christmas Morning 2006 at 2:30 a.m. when I was suddenly awakened. Sitting straight up in the bed, I looked over at my husband David who was 49 at the time.

His eyes were wide open, his mouth wide open and his entire body in a spasm. What I did not know at the time was that he was in Cardiac Arrest. Without even thinking, I reached over him hitting the speaker phone button on the phone and dialed 911. I quickly gave the lady my name, my husband's name and our address, then began describing David's condition.

As I did so, he died. Right there in front of me. Everything Stopped.

"He's Gone! He's Gone!" I shouted. I was no longer hearing a word she was saying. I immediately started CPR. No thinking involved.

I know it was God Who took over.

As I pumped David's chest and breathed into his lifeless body, it was just as if I were in a dream.

As I continued CPR, I called out for our son, Trammell, who was asleep down the hall.

He recalled hearing me and thinking that I was trying to wake him for a Christmas Morning surprise. But to his horror, I was not.

I asked him to run downstairs, turn on the lights and open the door! "EMS is on their way! Something's wrong with Dad!"

He did what I asked, then ran back upstairs, picked up the phone receiver and began telling the 911 worker what I was doing.

He then told her when he heard the fire truck pulling up in front of our house.

It seemed like an eternity as I continued CPR until the EMS workers took over.

They moved David to the floor and began hooking all sorts of equipment up to him.

Trammell and I got dressed and met in the hallway where we began to call family members as we heard the EMS workers shocking David over and over again.

"Not this! Not now!" I thought. David had, only the day before, taken me in his arms and promised to become the hus-

band and father that Trammell and I deserved, then presented me with a beautiful Cross ring he had had made for me to wear in place of my old wedding band as a symbol of his promise.

As I recall that unforgettable night a little over 5 years ago, I think about the fact that we have been married over 20 years now but David has no idea. Due to being dead for over an hour that night, he suffered severe irreversible brain damage. As I put it, God took my husband that fateful night but He gave me a precious 6 ft. baby boy.

David thinks I am his mommy and thinks our son, who is named after him, is a boy named Timmy who lived beside him in the 70's which is the area his mind is stuck in most of the time.

David is in diapers, drinks from a baby bottle, plays with preschool toys, watches "Nick Jr." all day and is bedridden. He doesn't know how to tell me that his diaper is wet or when he's hungry or if he's in pain. That's the part that really breaks my heart.

I wish I could say that was the end of the story. But a little over 13 months later on Superbowl Sunday, February 3, 2008 at 4:00 in the afternoon, our lives took another turn when Trammell, our only son, became paralyzed from the waist down due to a rare virus called Acute Transverse Myelitis.



# Living Under House Arrest (Cont'd)

By Linda Byce

In ten short minutes with no warning at all he went from being a perfectly healthy 14-year-old boy to completely paralyzed from the waist down.

We spent 6 weeks in MUSC and Philadelphia PA's Shriner's Hospital (because nothing could be done for Trammell here at the S.C. Shriner's Hospital due to the rarity of the virus). It strikes only one in a 1,000,000 people.

We had only thought we were living a nightmare before.

7 months with no income, before David's disability benefits started and another 2 years after that before he could receive Medicare (and he still doesn't qualify for Medicaid). No insurance.

Over \$1,000.00 a month for David's RX's, not to mention his diapers and pads and the fact that he needs 24/7 care, a \$1,100.00 house payment (which put me trying to sell our home in the worst housing market I could ask for). The list goes on AND ON.

THE GOOD NEWS! God has carried us through every minute of every day of every year of this nightmare. Trammell, after being told he would spend the rest of his life in a wheel chair, is now stand-

ing and walking, through God's Grace, with the aid of leg braces and a cane. He's now 18 and is an amazing Christian, not to mention self-taught musician. He even builds beautiful electric guitars—all gifts from God. My only hope is for him to somehow make friends. I have homeschooled him since first grade. Now, due to the fact that he and I can leave our home for only three hours a week, he does not know anyone. The friends he had before our nightmare began have gone on with their lives and he no longer hears from them. That breaks my heart!

When I look back at ALL we have been through and are STILL going through I see what I wish I had seen so many years ago. God has put me in a place where I have NO CHOICE but to rely on HIM for EVERYTHING.

I ask myself, "Why did it take something like my whole world being turned upside down before I realized that's the way it should be?"

We should live every day relying on God for E V E R Y T H I N G.

And He has NEVER let us go without. Before they call I will answer; while they

are still speaking I will hear. Isaiah 65:24

We have seen this time and time again!

As fate would have it—our hearts are broken once again. Four weeks ago my Mom passed away due to Cardiac Arrest. That chilling late night call came from my sister, Glenda, on a Saturday night.

Mama's the first one of us to meet Jesus. My heart breaks for my dad. They were married for 55 years. He has lost his best friend, the love of his life.

I am now moving us to a small apartment in Easley to be near him and the rest of our family so that I can help in any way I can.

### Isaiah 41:10

*"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*

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By Amanda Seawright



## Who Am I?

Daughter, Sister, Aunt, Mother, Wife and Employee, etc. We could go on and on with our titles. But just as we have many titles and are many things to many people, so God is to us. He is our Savior, Father, Redeemer, Friend, Protector, Forgiver. He wants to be all of these and more. We sometimes feel like we are pulled in several different directions at once but that's when we need to depend on God. We need to allow Him to be all He wants to be for us.

As women, God has designed us to live through our hearts and that's why we need to let Him live in ours. We feel love, hurt and many emotions through our hearts. When our hearts get broken and shattered, we start to put up walls

to protect it and soon we have a heart of stone. We push everyone away letting them only get so close for fear of being hurt again.

Jesus is standing there with outstretched arms saying, "Come here, my child! Let me heal you. There in that moment, we can either choose to let Jesus start to mend us, piece by piece, like putting a puzzle back together or live broken and in pain. Sometimes we need to be completely down so Jesus can build us back up like He wants us to be. He can make us into the women we need to be and want to be.

We will be able to feel love, joy, pleasure, peace and true happiness. We need to pattern our lives after God and strive to

be all we can be for Him. Only Jesus is perfect but we should try our best to live a holy life so others will see Jesus in us.

So who are we? We are many things to many people, but most importantly we are children of God. When we are all we can be for God, then we will be the best we can be in every area of our lives!

Lord...

*Help me to be all I can be for you! I give myself completely to You. Mold me and make me in your image. Thank You, Father! Amen*



## So, Has My Wife Been Trying to Cook Again?

By Brenda Horne

with my family and my friends. If you want good food, ask my husband to fix it. Yet I am a trooper and I still try!

It's the Friday before Christmas. My husband and baby daughter have gone to her basketball practice, so my 17-year-old daughter and I are left to cook. (the meals she prepares are...cereal!) So we decide to pop a frozen lasagna in the oven and be done with it.

All was well, until I notice my normally quiet oven is lit up like the fourth of July. I holler for my 17-year-old daughter to come look. Sparks are flying behind the small glass window as we stand there gawking at the oven. I quickly reach over and turn the oven knob to off. "That should stop the sparking," I tell her. But instead the fireworks got bigger.

So being the brave souls that we are, we ran to the living room and peeked around the wall into the kitchen to watch. "How is it still sparking?" I questioned my *all-knowing teenager*. "I turned off the oven, the sparks should have stopped!," I continued. She said she didn't know but if the house burned down she didn't want to be stuck with the ugly shoes she was wearing, so she quickly ran and changed into her new boots!

Returning, she had on her new boots along with her phone, iPod and car keys, just in case !!

So we watch the fireworks display in the oven for a few more seconds and I conclude that it is not getting better. So my heroic daughter darts into the kitchen, grabs the fire extinguisher then darts

back into the living room. She spins around with extinguisher in hand and jumps into her super-hero stance... ready for action. I asked if she even knows how to use a fire extinguisher! "Of course I do," she replies. "There is an acronym that tells you how to use it....I just can't remember it right now!"

"I feel safer already," I laugh as she assured me of her safety knowledge.

Well, there we stand, behind the wall, Wonder Woman at my side and the oven is still popping like a firecracker. I decide it's time to call my husband. "I'll call your dad, he can tell me what to do!" I grab my cell phone and quickly dial his number, after a long pause, his phone finally starts ringing ... in the living room! Yep, he left his phone next to the recliner!

My daughter and I look at the phone and then at each other. Ok, so what now?

Reluctantly, I decide to call 911. The dispatcher answers and I tell her my dilemma. "The fire trucks are on their way," she says calmly and hangs up.

I tell my daughter (still in her fireman stance), "The trucks are on their way." I glance around the living room and shriek. "We can't have strangers see this mess! Start cleaning!"

My daughter lowers her extinguisher. "Quick, throw all the stuff in your bedroom and close the door!" "Good plan!" I tell my handy sidekick, and we start the "chunk and throw" procedure.

The clean-up process was completed just in the nick of time as the fire engine arrived. My trusty assistant (who had her "fire extinguisher of life" back in hand) ran to the front porch and watched as the fireman approached. That's when she noticed a cute fire fighter and decided it was safe to put down her extin-

guisher and let these good, brave men do their job!

The fire fighters came in, opened the oven door and pulled out the now defunct "sparkler of death"! "What was the problem?" I asked. "It was just your heating element. It went out," they said nonchalantly. "But it was sparking and popping like crazy with the oven turned OFF!" I said.

I continued explaining to the firefighters, as they walked back to their truck, how I had never seen anything like that before and how I couldn't reach my husband on the phone and that I was so sorry to call them out for such a silly reason.

They were very kind and told me I did the right thing, that's when my husband pulled up in the driveway. He walked up the porch, looked the firemen in the eyes and said, "So, has my wife been trying to cook again?!"

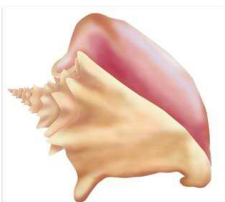
This is a funny story that ended well. But it just as easily could have turned tragic had the oven caught fire then our house may have burned. Or, if we had tried to stop the fireworks, we may have been hurt.

So I told this story to say this ...

Jesus Christ is in control, the situations we face do not change that fact ... and because *He* is in control, we can handle anything thrown at us, be it comical or catastrophic!

### Psalm 46:1

*God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.*



## My Gift from the Sea

By Cathy McCormick

The ocean is my "special" place. It's the place I go when I need to think; when I need to

recharge my batteries; when I need to BE STILL AND LISTEN. For the last year and a half I have been in desperate

need of some beach time ... to sit on the beach, hang my "do no disturb" sign on my big toe, and just sit and simply contemplate the ocean, the waves and the sky.

I was blessed to have a friend offer me her lovely villa in Venice, Florida for a month. I was beside myself with joy and

anticipation. A MONTH at the beach! Oh my! A whole, delicious, relaxing, recharging month! So I packed up my summer clothes, my Kindle, my bible and my bible study, my trusty travel companion, Harry the Toy Poodle, arranged for one of my church angels to feed and water my outside cats ... and OFF I WENT!!!



# My Gift from the Sea (Cont'd)

By Cathy McCormick

What freedom I felt as I drove through the countryside on my way to Flor-E-dah! Oh my, I told myself as I crossed into Florida: "I did it ... I can go anywhere I want!"

It's amazing how God works.

I arrived in Venice. I knew that the first week of my visit would be hectic as I was helping my aunt pull off a surprise 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party for my uncle. And yes, it was hectic, busy, and also a lot of fun. In fact, I was having so much fun that the party (or partying) went on for another 10 days. I was the belle of the ball, so to speak. I was going out every day and every night—sunset on the beach, dinner out or at a friend's house, a gathering of people, going to listen to live music, etc. WOW! For a woman who had just spent the last 1½ years either in the hospital with her husband or at home, I felt like I had gone from ZERO to 180 mph in 10 seconds flat!

It was fun. I have to admit it. But something interesting happened. I started to recognize that something HUGE was missing from my life and that I wasn't enjoying my recreating anymore. I felt empty. Sure there were a lot of people around me. BUT ... I began to realize that God, Faith, Spirit, were never a part of the conversation. That I was spending no time in quiet thought. I was not spending any time with my God. I realized that what I was sorely, painfully, ashamedly missing what I had come to Florida for --- QUIET TIME TO BE WITH MY GOD.

I have to laugh when I look back on this time. I was being such a wild child! I left Pickens armed with the "best of intentions" to get some much needed R&R (relaxation and RE-creation). I hit the border of Florida, and just like when I was a teenager, my first reaction was - I AM FREE! I am out here in the world and the world is my oyster!!!! So what do I do with my freedom? Do I use the newfound freedom from care giving and grief to seek quiet reflection and divine direction? No ... just like a teenager, I choose to cut loose and played and had myself a good ole time.

Oh my. My vacation time is running out. I'm panicking. I am angry with myself. I've wasted my time! I've wasted this opportunity! I can't go home in the same shape I arrived! I need to know the answers to the questions that have been

plaguing me since my husband died. Oh, God --- what have I done?

Like a teenager who has cut loose and realizes she has strayed too far from home, my sweet Heavenly Father gathered me into His arms and reminded me that He is waiting for me and that all I need to do is to choose to be still and He'll talk to me.

1 Kings 19: 11-13 talks to us about how God speaks to us. We might expect that it would be a booming, thundering voice--but here we read that God did not speak to Elijah through the violent wind, or the fire, but through a gentle whisper.

Recognizing that this Type A, do-everything-for-everyone-else person that I am needs solitude to really disconnect, I decided to make an investment in myself. I found a little house on the beach and rented it for 10 days and moved myself, my trusty dog, and my unopened bible and bible study into this little house by the sea.

This is where I came face to face with myself. Upon my arrival at my "perfect" little beach house, my "perfect" little beach, my "perfect" opportunity to disconnect from the world ... guess what happened? There I was! The "I" being the woman who did NOT know what to do with herself unless she was BUSY doing for OTHERS! Did I enter my "perfect" haven ready to be quiet, to be still? No! I panicked --- I kept thinking about what errands I needed to run, what chores I should be doing, was there anything I needed to or should be doing for someone else?

With no real errands to run, with no chores to be done, with no one I knew anywhere around, guess what happened? I was quiet enough to HEAR my God talking to me. Be still, and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)

The most incredible thing happened to me. I became QUIET. I STOPPED rushing around trying to DO. I finally realized I had to STOP DOING and just BE!

Oh, the gifts that came pouring over me once I became still. Uninterrupted bible study; time to reflect on the message. God wanted to etch upon my heart; the

gentle reminder that like the sea, life ebbs and flows; PEACE.

What God wanted me to know was that I was NOT STUCK; that I was NOT LOST: that I am simply in the "middle time". Psalm 126 talks about the middle times in our lives.

When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

In the first half of the psalm, the psalmist testifies that God had done something wonderful, dramatic, and gracious in the past. In the second half of the psalm, he petitions God to do it again.

Oh my goodness! Talk about my heart opening wide, my mind opening wider, and a huge light bulb going off! THAT WAS THE PROBLEM!!!! I have been living in the "middle times" ... the time between a good time remembered and another good time hoped for. That described me to the T! My life felt like this diagram:



The "good time remembered" is when God lifted me up off my knees and carried me through the storm of my husband's illness. The "good time hoped for" is a desire to transform my loss into a purpose. The middle, well, that is no man's land. It is: lonely, helpless, scary, and dark. But my bible study told me to read Jeremiah 12:11: FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU".

Oh, be still my heart! I understood immediately what God was telling me! In that very instant I felt lighter, I felt purposeful, I KNEW I wasn't ALONE, I KNEW my life has a purpose and that I am NOT the person to decide that purpose, that God is LEADING me to that purpose right this very second! Oh how my heart is singing! Oh how the joy and excitement of what is coming next in my life overwhelms me!

*Psalm 46:10*  
*Be still and know that I am God.*





## My Gift from the Sea (Cont'd)

By Cathy McCormick

We are never stuck. We know that we're always exactly where we are supposed to be. But now I KNOW without a doubt that God has a plan for me and that I just need to remember that, open myself to it, stop trying to "decide", and let God

LEAD ME to his plan.

I have returned from the beach RE-created, rested, and alive with the excitement of knowing that God is going to use me to His purpose. Amen and thank you, God!

*Note: For those of you who have read Anne Morrow Lindberg's beautiful book, A Gift From The Sea, you know that I've borrowed her title for this article. If you haven't read her book, treat yourself to an incredible gift and a beautiful read.*



## The Perfect Storm

By Sharon Hawkins

In 2000, a movie was made about an unusual storm that took place in 1991. It starred heart-throb, George Clooney. This storm was called "The Perfect Storm" and was about a confluence of two powerful weather fronts and a hurricane which caused, among other disasters, the sinking of a fishing boat, "The Andrea Gail." It is believed that the boat was literally swallowed by a giant, rogue wave in the midst of the storm. Rogue waves have been recorded as high as 10 stories (about 100 feet). The Andrea Gail was never to be heard from again.

For the last decade, two mega-storms have been brewing in my life. These storms have been leading up to a perfect storm so huge that they threatened my livelihood, my life, and my faith.

Storm Number 1: On April 30, 2010, I discovered that I had an employee who had been stealing money from the company that I own. Sounds terrible I know, but it's sad to say that in our society today that's just not that shocking as news goes. What made it especially hard? Well, she was one of my best friends, it was hundreds of thousands of dollars, and she had done it for over twelve years. "How does that happen?," you're probably wondering. To put it simply, she was in a position of trust. I trusted her with everything and she tried to take everything. I can't even describe the hurt, the sleepless nights, the heartache I experienced for over 15 months waiting for the investigation to be complete and the case to be settled in Federal court.

Storm Number 2: On June 5, 2011 as I drove to work from my son's 5<sup>th</sup> grade awards ceremony, my phone rang. It was the breast imaging center and something didn't look right on my mammogram. They wanted me to come back in. I re-

member so vividly calling my husband and saying, "Honey, I just can't take one more thing!" He said, "I know you can't." But God had different plans, I did have to 'take one more thing.' On June 8, I learned I had breast cancer. The nurse told me that the cancer had been brewing for a long time as it takes 10 years for a 1 cm breast cancer tumor to form and mine was a little bit larger than that, 1.8 cm. I know that 1 out of 8 American women get breast cancer so you might think, "well, that's terrible but not uncommon." What made it harder was that my mom had breast cancer and I lost her to cancer four years ago on March 10. I now shared this disease with her, but I couldn't share this with her, if you know what I mean. Then, because of our family history, it was determined that I would need to have both breasts removed. On July 5, I had a bilateral mastectomy and am currently going through reconstruction. My world came crashing down around me. How could I endure these storms? Again, here we go with the hurt, the sleepless nights, the heartache, this time with constant pain for weeks and weeks and additional surgeries added to the mix. Wow, unbelievable, I couldn't even describe how overwhelmed I was!

Then, God did something amazing in a way that only He can. He converged my storms and brought good out of the most horrific of situations. Because I was already dealing with the embezzlement case when cancer hit, I knew I couldn't deal with that storm on my own with the other storm raging. I just gave my cancer to God right from the first minute. Then, the cancer helped me realize what's most important in my life—my walk with God, my health, my family and friends. Someone once said, "Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other

person will die." I had to forgive her. I already had enough poison in my body and I didn't need any more. I started praying and before long my heart changed toward her. At the sentencing before she left for federal prison, I was able to talk with her and tell her that I loved her and would be praying for her. That was only possible because of God's great love for me and the work that He's been doing in my life through the storms.

Miracle Number 1: I learned I wouldn't have to have chemo or radiation and once I get through the reconstruction journey, I'll have my life back. I now have a new appreciation of my life. God has broken my heart for others dealing with pain, cancer and loss and I have a new passion to reach out to them.

Miracle Number 2: The sentencing is behind us. Perhaps, one of the greatest miracles in all of this is that the media didn't do further harm to my business. They didn't even mention it. Through the difficulty of those 15 months, our company has become stronger and we've made changes to insure such a problem could not occur again.

God is faithful! He knows how to get us through a storm. He held me gently in His arms above the raging winds and sea, while He slammed my two mega-storms together until they died to complete peace. As my preacher says, "Peace is not the absence of the storm, it's the presence of Jesus in your storms." Praise God, He's riding in my boat with me! And that rogue wave, well, what I found out was that it was a wave of God's grace and mercy as He washed His love and protection across my storms. And, yes, Praise God, I was swallowed up completely by it! He held me tenderly and safely in His arms while He calmed the raging waters.



## Grace In The Wilderness Ministries

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### FOCUS SCRIPTURE VERSE:

Isaiah 43:19

...I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Grace In The Wilderness is an out-reach ministry for Today's Busy Woman. Our mission is to encourage women of all ages:

- To look upward to God as they discover Him in a new and deeper way,
- To look inward as they discover who they are in Christ, and
- To look outward as they discover God's plan for their lives.

We appreciate your prayers and support. Donations are also appreciated and may be made payable to Grace In The Wilderness Ministries (address to the left).

This is a bi-monthly newsletter. Visit [www.wildernessgrace.org](http://www.wildernessgrace.org) to subscribe for a free email copy or please call or email us for paper copies.

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*Avoid self pity. You can be pitiful or powerful but not both. -Joyce Meyer*

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