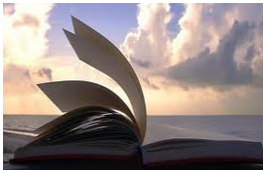


GRACE IN THE WILDERNESS

A MINISTRY FOR TODAY'S BUSY WOMAN



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



Turning Pages

Grace Ankle's loves to read!

In a matter of seconds, she can visit faraway places, be transformed into the heroine of an adventure and forget all the cares that come with being Today's Busy Woman.

Reading is her getaway and everybody knows Today's Busy Woman needs a getaway, right?! Well ... almost everybody. Sometimes her kids have trouble grasping the concept.

Grace loves to disappear, and, with a sneaky smile on her face, lock the bathroom door. She runs a hot bath, submerges her body into the tub and her mind into a book until the water gets cold or a family crisis beckons, whichever comes first.

In the novels that she reads, there are no piles of laundry, dishwashers to be emptied or bills to be paid. After all they are fairy tales ... lol!!

Today's Busy Woman's life is like a book. Sometimes there are slow starts, twisting turns, riveting climaxes, intriguing plots and surprise endings.

Parts of her book are so incredible she doesn't want them to end. Other parts are so difficult she can't turn the pages fast enough. Some so amazing, she doesn't want to forget them. Others so terrible, she doesn't want to remember them.

Life can be described at times as a horrible kind of wonderful ... like with childbirth. At other

times, it can be described as a wonderful kind of horrible ... like experiencing a parent's transition from his or her earthly home to Heaven. Laughter is sprinkled with our tears as we read our life's story.

Some life books have many pages, many chapters. Others are short stories that end all too quickly. There is a popular quote that says, "Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."

Life is a love story, a comedy and a tragedy all rolled into one. More than anything else it is a mystery.

The chapters unfold in expected order through the "hoods"—childhood, 'teen' hood, young adulthood, parenthood, middle adulthood, late adulthood, and grandparenthood.

But sometimes things happen that we don't expect and we find ourselves starting a new chapter while scratching our heads wondering when the last page of our last chapter got turned.

Unexpected news of another child on the way ... news from a doctor ... getting hired for a new job ... a layoff from a job ... a divorce ... or, the unthinkable, the death of a spouse or a child ... any of these plot twists can leave us in a state of bewilderment, frantically reviewing the pages, searching for answers

and trying hard to grasp what just happened.

Grace has had her share of ups and downs in her story. And through many trials, she's wondered what was coming in the pages ahead.

While it's okay for us to wonder what's next in God's will for us, we shouldn't worry. Romans 8:28 promises that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

God has provided us the greatest book ever written to give us insight into His plans for us. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11) Jesus knows how our story turns out. For those of us who accept Him as our personal Savior, He blesses our story with an eternity in Heaven with Him.

As we look ahead to a new year, Hebrews 12:2 reminds us to be "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith..."

We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day. (Edith Lovejoy Pierce)

What will we write in our 2013 book? To ensure a blessed new year, let's make "God" the first word.

By Sharon Hawkins

January/February 2013

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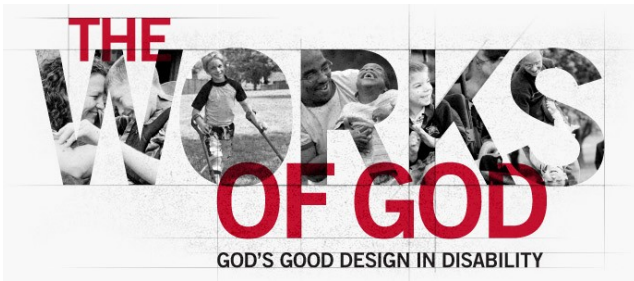
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Watch for information about the Grace In The Wilderness Women's Conference coming February 22-23, 2013 at Blue Ridge View Baptist Church in Pickens, SC

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.



Upcoming Disability Conference for Parents of Special Needs Children: New Covenant Church-Anderson, SC January 19, 2013 10 AM-4:00 PM

For parents of special needs children, registration is now open for "The Works of God, God's Good Design in Disability!" Visit <http://necchurch.net/#/what-coming-up/disability-conference>

This is a Disability Conference at New Covenant Church in Anderson on Jan. 19 from 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with a re-podcast. Speakers and topics include:

John Piper-When Jesus Meets Disability and How a Christian Hedonist Handles

Deep Disappointment

Greg Lucas-Parenting When Your Heart is Continually Crushed

Krista Horning-Testimony of God's Good Design

Mark Talbot-Longing for Wholeness: Chronic Suffering and Christian Hope

Nancy Guthrie-Thinking Like Jesus About Disability

There is no charge for the conference but registration is required (via website). Childcare is provided.

Please sign up for this day of encouragement and help spread the word!!!

For more information, please contact Mary Elisabeth Cutliff at 864-375-1858 or New Covenant Church at 864-224-8724.



Titus 2 Wisdom for Women: What Do I Choose?

By Cathy McCormick

It's a new year. I think all of us are ready to close the door on 2012 and have a fresh start on a brand new year. I know I am! Although there were, of course, many blessings in 2012, for many of us it was a year marked by events that shook us; made us question the very foundations of our country and our society.

Late in December our world was rocked by the senseless killing of 20 innocent children, babies actually, and 7 adults. As children of God we turn to our faith and our God for comfort and peace. We ask, WHY?" We know that there are no answers to be had this side of heaven.

"So you also have to sorrow now. But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice and no one will rob you of your joy. In that day you will not ask me anything." (John 16:22-23)

As we enter into a new, fresh, unblemished year, we have a lot of choices to make. Like all new years, we think about the resolutions we will make. Usually we make them and quickly forget them. This year, however, I think we need to make some resolutions and truly stick to them ... our families, our com-

munities, our country, and our world are so in need of resolve and revival.

As Christians we "know" that it is our job to serve God and to mirror his love in all we do. As the old saying goes, "Actions speak louder than words". 2012 gave us a first-hand glimpse of the battle that is going on between good and evil, between God and the devil. As Christians, our job is to suit up in His armor and help fight the good fight.

How do we do that? How do we get in the "fight"? We ask God. We vow to stand up for and with God every day in everything we do.

"Until now you have asked for nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete." (John 16:24)

How do we do it? We vow to stand up for and with God every day in everything we do. We ask God to guide us. We speak up about our faith. We speak up about our beliefs. We speak up about our morals. We speak up about what is right and wrong.

What do we choose for this coming year?

We can choose to LIVE our faith—to not back down from stating our beliefs and

not being dissuaded because some call it proselytizing.

We can choose to be a part of the revival that America is wanting and needing—to start with a daily revival of our faith and to encourage others to do the same.

We can choose to believe in the power and grace of our Lord-to not get discouraged by what "man" is doing and continue to believe in God's power above all others.

We can make a difference. We can help change this world. We just need one thing ... GOD ... and we already have Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!



Let's Go Planting: Protection

By Cathy C. Whisnant

As we start a brand new year, I cannot think of a better resolution than to spend this year focused on planting seeds in our children's and grandchildren's hearts. The seeds that we are planting will help them in becoming children, teens, and adults who love God with all their hearts.

I hope that over the last couple of months you have been planting the seed of tenderness that we discussed in our last article.

The second seed in our garden is that of **Protection**. When your children are afraid, who do they run to first to offer them protection and safety? Most mothers will go down fighting to defend and protect our children. We are always seeking better ways to protect them, and we will always have the instinct of protection no matter their age. I know this because both of my sons are grown with children of their own and I still find myself trying to protect them from this harsh world in which we live.

The best way to give your children the protection they need is to simply keep

your eyes and ears open. If it wouldn't cause too much pain, I would suggest using toothpicks to keep your eyes wide open at all times. There is so much going on around our families at school, at work, and at play.

We can look to the mother of Moses' as our example in how to protect our children. It amazes me how she came up with such a clever way to protect her baby boy. The decree had been given for all male babies to be thrown into the river.

If you are not familiar with this story, please read the first and second chapters of Exodus. What Satan meant for harm; God meant for good. Moses' mother made sure her son would travel safely down the river by carefully constructing him a basket in which he could float down the river safely. Then she placed her daughter, Moses' sister, by the river to watch what happened to her baby boy. When Pharaoh's daughter found baby Moses, his sister asked her if she should find a nurse of the Hebrew women to nurse the child for her. Moses' mother was called to be that nurse! She was able to protect her son who was supposed to be killed. God was so faithful to this mother. He

had great plans for her son. If she had followed the order to have all male babies killed, we would not have the great story of the Israelites being freed from the Egyptians, the Ten Commandments, and other great things Moses accomplished for the Lord.

The best way to protect your children is to teach them God's Word; another seed we will soon plant. Teach them how Satan seeks to devour them and how God's Word offers them protection. My prayer for my children and grandchildren every day is that God will place His hedge of protection around them. I hope you will make this your prayer and teach your children that God is their ultimate protection by teaching them to pray every morning before they leave home that God would protect them as they go to school, work, and play.

God has promised us that He is always with us! So claim this promise knowing that it means His presence and His protection is forever upon us. The best way to stay protected is to stay focused on Christ. Teach yourselves and your children that the awareness of God's presence in our lives is our best protection.



Bitter or Better?

By Jo Ann Whitaker

Along life's journey, we encounter pain, problems and trials. Sometimes, it can be down right debilitating and life altering. Here's the quandary—do we allow those incidents and circumstances to take us into a pit of despair and hopelessness or do we instead look up, keep on believing and trust God through the pain?

First of all, let me say that pain is pain and it doesn't matter how it hits you or where it came from, it hurts! Never minimize the pain of another! If you break your toe, it hurts! It doesn't matter if you drop a brick on it or hit it on a chair in the middle of the night. Bottom line—painful things truly hurt, especially those pains of the heart!

But with every hurt, we have choices. Will I learn something from it? Will I hurt others because I'm hurt? Will I close myself off from those around me that care? Will I retreat from life? Will I

no longer trust? Will I grow angry? Will I allow that anger to freeze up inside of me and cause deep depression? Will I seek counsel or help? Will I turn to my faith? Will I pray and seek God's face for comfort and a plan? Will I become bitter? Or, will I become better? Will I use my pain to help others?

I've seen bitter...and it is not a pretty picture!

We falsely believe that our personal attitudes and beliefs do not affect those around us. This verse proves otherwise: "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." (Hebrews 12:15) The grace of God needs to be consulted and applied through the Word of God to every situation that lends itself toward anger and bitterness. Otherwise, not only does a bitter root take hold in our own heart and live, but it springs up and causes trouble wherever we go and defiles everyone around us. We all know

people who are bitter and spew ugly wherever they go. And, we've all been guilty of this from time to time. The goal is to stop nursing our hurts to the point that they take root and turn ugly on us, in us and around us!

Instead of becoming bitter and ugly, we need to quickly turn our hurts and pains over to the Lord so He can heal us, teach us, forgive us, change us and comfort us. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, the Bible tells us:

"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

Bitter or Better? (Cont'd)

By Jo Ann Whitaker

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.”

As we begin 2013, ask yourself, “Have I allowed hurts from the past to linger in my heart and cause bitterness? Do I need to forgive someone? Do I need to offer an olive branch? What do I need to do if I find that I have become bitter and allowed it to take over my life and heart? What am I teaching those around me? What are my friends, family and children learning from me? What will it take for me to move on?” Here are several scriptures to prayerfully and honestly consider:

Ephesians 4:31-32 - Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Proverbs 15:1 - A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 20:22 - Do not say, “I’ll pay you back for this wrong!” Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.

Matthew 6:14-15 - For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Now, for those of us who have learned the lessons above—sometimes the hard way—how do we help those around us? How do I keep from growing bitter in the future?

Can I gently help someone suffering from hurts of the past? Can I pray for those involved in unresolved conflict? Can I be an instrument of peace? Can I love them anyway—even at a distance to keep the bile of bitterness from affecting me? Am I being asked to boldly proclaim the truth and get my hands dirty? This verse comes to mind: Matthew 5:9 - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

I walked away with one lesson from The Mind of Christ Bible Study several years ago. Many of us are peace lovers. Peace

lovers will do whatever it takes to quiet everything down – ignore, stuff, sweep under a rug, keep secrets in the dark (where they frequently grow and fester). Instead, Peacemakers do the hard work of doing whatever is necessary to make things right! That may involve further pain.

Just like a child with a splinter in their finger, if it isn’t removed, it will fester and grow infected. If he or she hides it for fear of removal, the pain later will be worse than the initial pain. Just like us as adults with minor health issues—keep ignoring and it may manifest into a full blown major problem.

Pains and problems are best dealt with quickly and biblically. Otherwise, things get ugly fairly quickly. As I was told in the midst of grief, you can stuff it and ignore it, but it is still there and you will deal with it eventually. It is best to deal with it now. Do I need to gently help someone unpack their pain? Can I use the comfort I’ve received to comfort someone else?



Samuel

Two weeks ago I was holding my sweet Samuel still. He had taken his last breath at 6:17a.m. that morning (Sept. 10, 2012).

The Lord allowed Tim and I to consider that he may be too sick and weak to keep fighting on Sunday afternoon. He had a fever for awhile, but Sunday it became very high and nothing was helping to lower it. Tim and I were by his side all afternoon with cold cloths, a little fan, Tylenol & Ibuprophen. His little face was so pleasant, but he was miserable. Then his oxygen became so low we had to put a cannula on his nose, which normally he would not stand, but he felt so bad he didn't care. The other children wanted to go to spend the night with their Grammy and aunts, so we let them.

Tim and I sat with him in the new room enjoying the cool air conditioner and watching the sun set. Tim asked Samuel if he could see his angel and he turned his head to the right and looked at the

corner! I prayed he would have great comfort! He cooled off a little and went to sleep. His breathing started sounding a little better so we thought, like every time before when we thought he was too tired to fight, he may be getting better. We continued his breathing treatments, and that helped a little, it seemed. So, Tim made a comfy spot on the couch for Samuel beside me and Tim was on the other side of him and we slept for a little while.

Early Sunday around 1 a.m. & 4 a.m., he woke up struggling to breathe and his eyes were open, but he was not looking at us like normal. A few other things happened that were confusing and hard and we realized his body was not working right anymore. Tim and I tried so hard to stay strong and comfort him all night. We sang many sweet songs about Heaven and the Lord's comfort and care. We read many Bible verses and prayed many times. We held his hands and snuggled.

We loved him so richly for almost eight

years and the last night was full of our love for him and the rich blessing he was and is to us. As his breathing became slower, we said again his favorite verse, the 23rd Psalm. Tim wanted to play the song “Come to Jesus” for him and us. As that song played, we reassured him he was about to be healed eternally and be safe in the arms of Jesus. At that same moment, he left his body. We were broken and mourned so deeply our precious son.

We held him for awhile and then called our dear hospice nurse. We called our children and family. They came and loved on him and the Lord brought us great comfort on this day that we had all been dreading. We were able to spend a while with his body and then we knew it was time. Tim carried him, as we always did, to the hearse that came to get him. No stretcher in the house. The funeral director said he had never seen anyone do that before and it changed his life. We loved holding our boy and helping him; that was our life. They took him away and we held each other.

By Mary Elisabeth Cutliff

Samuel (Cont'd)

By Mary Elisabeth Cutliff

Later that night we wanted to see his body prepared before the children and that was so very hard for me. The next day I could see the value in seeing him that way. It was just his shell, he is in Heaven. It was so hard to look at him in his funeral bed, those beautiful curls and long eye lashes. He was so perfect and peaceful. He didn't look like he was in pain that last night. I am so very thankful that Tim and I were with him the whole time.

Every day since, we have tried our best to figure out how to do life with this huge piece missing. The grief comes in waves. I still think at 9 p.m. I need to hook up his feeding pump. Tim comes home (he always came to talk to Samuel and give him a kiss first) but then stops and catches himself. The house is so quiet without his treatments and shaking vest going. The oxygen is gone. All of his equipment and things are everywhere and I'm not sure when and how to move them. And much more.

The kids are sad and miss him, but they are doing better than we expected; their grief is there and they are expressing it in their own ways. Tim and I and all who love him are missing him and mourning. We feel a hole in our hearts so deeply it is painful at times. If you ask us how we are, we may not answer, because we are sad but don't always know if the person asking really wants to know.

We do rejoice that Samuel is healed and is in Glory, but it is painful to know we will never have him here again. He was a precious saint and touched so many lives. We will always be thinking about him and missing him, every day. Today I am thankful for God's promises that are carrying us through this new life without Samuel and knowing that he is in Heaven and happy and perfect in Jesus' arms.

Psalm 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

We also sang this song to him many times over the past few months. A friend sent it to him and he knew it well. We sang it his last night and at his funeral. It is Samuel's song:

"And on that day
When my strength is failing,
The end draws near
and my time has come,
Still my soul will sing
Your praise unending,
10,000 years and then forever more!
Bless the Lord, o my soul,
Worship His Holy name.
Sing like never before,
Oh my soul, I worship Your holy name."

[Watch "10,000 Reasons \(Bless the Lord\) - Matt Redman \(Best Worship Song Ever\) \(with Lyrics\)" on YouTube](#)

Follow Mary Elisabeth's blog at <http://www.cutliffcrew6.blogspot.com>



My Favorite Chairs

By Liz Rampy

A great chair moves with you from house to house. It may be too big or too little for the space you have, but you keep it because it's a great chair. You cover it and recover it to keep up with decorating trends. You keep it until the point the springs are coming through the fabric and it has passed the point of repair. Once it is gone and replaced, you still think about it as you try to get settled into your new one. Even when you have bonded with the new one, you still say that the old one was "a great chair."

Everyone has a different opinion of what makes a great chair. Some prefer firm and sturdy. Others want to be enveloped by it. I personally fall into the latter category. I want to pull up my feet and sink into it. Yet, my three most favorite chairs of all times vary greatly.

My beanbag chair is the most comfort-

able. It meets my required balance of contour and support. It is large. At the end of the day, I drag it to the foot of the bed. To sit in it, I complete a jump and flop routine that I have nearly perfected.

My husband, Shane, is waiting for me. He is lying on his stomach on the bed with his head propped up on pillows. That puts him in position to play with my hair while we sit and watch TV together. Actually, he usually watches TV while I doze off. This end of the day routine is what I look forward to. It is my safe place.

The Blue Chair belonged to my friend and former coworker, Cheryl. The Blue Chair was a recliner that had many visitors and was perhaps a little grungy. I'd overlook those facts and sit in it anyway. The magic of The Blue Chair was that it was in Cheryl's office. When I'd had a stressful day, Cheryl could tell. Even though I tried to cover it up, she just

knew. She'd ask, "Do you need to come sit in my chair?" We'd go to her office and close the door. I'd sit in her chair and share with her what was on my heart. I'd leave with less stress and a more positive outlook.

My grandparents' chair is a wingback chair that may have been gold when I was born. Now it is basically white with some type of print. It is neither soft nor cushy. I didn't know until recently that I liked the chair.

The chair is where I would sit when I visited my grandparents. It is in the living room with Grandmother's and Granddaddy's recliners. When Grandmother passed away in May, Granddaddy started sitting in the den instead of the living room. I noticed the switch but didn't think much about it. I assumed that it was too hard for him to sit where they sat together for 68 years. I just moved my visits to the den.

My Favorite Chairs (Cont'd)

By Liz Rampy

About a month ago, I went into the house to visit Granddaddy. I found as I walked through calling his name that he wasn't in there. I stopped in the living room. The sun was shining brightly through the window and warming the room. It was at that moment that I realized I missed the chair. I stopped and sat in it. I already knew that I missed my grandmother. I am aware of that every day. I miss her smile. I miss her laugh. I miss her silliness. I miss her voice.

I knew I missed *her*. What I had not thought of is that I miss *being her grand-*

daughter. When I was sitting in that chair, I felt that I was the most important thing in the world to her. If my hair was up, she liked my hair up. If it was down, she loved it down. She'd always want to know where I got my shoes. She'd have to touch my dangly earrings. She wanted to know if I'd had a good day. She'd tell me that I would never know how proud she was of me.

As different as my three favorite chairs are, there are common denominators. In each one, I have felt safe, special, and

loved. I've learned that it's not about the construction of the chair, but how comfortable being myself I have been in each one.

Do those around you love who they are when they are with you? As Christians, we are instructed to love one another. There are times when we may not know exactly how to carry out this command. I'd like to suggest that providing someone's "favorite chair" may be the perfect start.



The Days Of Our Lives

By Marie Pritchett

How many of you grew up watching "Days Of Our Lives"? Well, I did. My grandmother and my mom would gather in the living room at 1:00 (no matter

what was going on) to hear MacDonald Carey say "Like sands through the hour glass ... so are the Days of our Lives". Not that I am a supporter of soap operas, but there is so much truth in this statement. Each day, each event that happens in our lives is like a grain of this sand. Only God knows the number of days, hours and even minutes in each of our lives and what each of our days will hold.

Each time I hear about someone losing a child I feel like someone has punched me in the stomach. I always stop and pray for the family because I know the journey they have begun. My family is on this journey. Some days it seems impossible. On those days I am constantly reminded that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

I am not pretending to have all the answers. I don't! Many times since losing my son, Josh, I have asked God to give me a manual. I can follow instructions but I had no idea how to survive the loss of my son! Up until July 1, 2005, the grains of sand in my life would probably seem pretty boring to some people but looking back they were worth more than all the money in the world. Parents who love me, a sister who is my biggest cheerleader, married to my high school sweetheart, two beautiful children, a member of the best church around, and the best friends in the world--my life was good! Oh, we had our challenges like anyone

else but there was a lot of love in our family and I felt very blessed. On July 1, 2005, the grains of sand in my life were forever changed! Our 20-year-old son was killed in a single car accident right around the corner from our house.

If you could examine closely the days that followed, you would see a lot of nothing! I felt as if I was simply existing, going through the motions! I am sure those of you who have experienced such a loss know exactly what I am talking about.

Proverbs 27:1, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." With no warning, the days of our lives can suddenly come to an end. Job said in Job 14:1, "Man born of a woman is of a few days and full of trouble."

Not only was I dealing with my grief, but watching my husband and our precious daughter deal with theirs was almost impossible for me to handle. Many days I would cry out to God and ask him why!!" Some people may say you are never supposed to question God. Well, I am here to tell you that God made us and he understands everything about us. We are human, how could we not question the loss of a child?!! I begged God for a miracle!! I wanted Him to bring my son back!!!

There were even times I felt like God had deserted me. Looking back now, I see that my loving Savior never left me. As a matter of fact, he wrapped his loving arms around me and my family and carried us through our wilderness.

Just 22 months after our son's accident, our precious daughter was in a four

wheeler accident and suffered a major head injury. My world came crashing down again. First we had lost Josh our son to a head injury and now Ali was fighting for her life due to one. After a few days in the hospital we discovered that Ali had lost her hearing in her left ear and her sense of taste and smell. The nightmare seemed never ending. The doctors suggested surgery but only after giving her a few months to heal. During the days and weeks following the accident, I began to feel God doing a work in our lives. The anger and hurt we had been struggling with for almost two years began to slowly subside. My heart was filled with gratitude that Ali was still with us.

Following the first surgery the doctor called us into a little room and, with tears in his eyes, he told us that he had never seen that much damage in someone who survived! He said Ali is truly a miracle!!! You see the miracle I had begged for after Josh's accident I received in Ali!!

The first surgery was unsuccessful and it was recommended that we take Ali to Duke to see a doctor. We prayed that God would show us the minute we walked in the office if we were in the right place. We walked in and all over the walls were newspaper articles about Dr. McElveen, "the miracle worker"!! Within just a couple of days, Ali began to be able to taste and smell. When the packing was removed from her ear, she knew that her hearing had improved. Hearing tests later revealed that Ali's hearing had not only returned but was almost 100%. God not only healed our daughter but He was

Days Of Our Lives (Cont'd)

By Marie Pritchett

giving us a second chance—a second chance at life. We couldn't continue to grieve the loss of Josh but we needed to begin the celebration of each day we have here on earth and be thankful for those precious 20 years we had with Josh.

God may seem slow to those of us who are grieving or hurting. But God is not slow! He is just not on our timetable. We cannot sit and wait for Christ's return but we should live with the realization that life is short and that we have a purpose and God has a work for us to do.

We should not be angry or disappointed that Christ hasn't returned yet. Instead we should live in eager expectation of his coming! What would you like to be doing when Christ returns? That is how we

should be living each and every day. I can tell you when I hear that trumpet sound, you better watch out because I will be flapping my arms and may just knock you out of the way!!!

So, we have a choice. We can choose to let our grief consume us and destroy us or we can choose to spend each and every day allowing God to work through us and shine in our lives. Now, is it going to be easy? No!!! I miss Josh just as much today as the day he left this earth. But how can any good come out of his life if I choose to shut myself off from the rest of the world?

For a reason I may never understand, my family was chosen for this journey. I used to wake up each morning and say, "God, let today be the day you come

back." Then I realized I was being selfish. There are so many people who still don't know God or about His goodness and His love. And there is not a doubt in my mind that I would not be here without Him today. God loves me and He loves you!

So, I am here to tell you that our lives will never be the same. I will never be the person I was before Josh's accident but I pray I will be a better person because of him. After experiencing a tragedy or life change, we must all find our new "normal" but with God we can not only survive but we can thrive again.

Now the choice is yours. How will you choose to live out these "Days Of Our Lives"?



Loading Up The Camels

By Sharon Hawkins

Marketing has never really been my thing; at least in my opinion. However, it seems that God has had a very different idea about that. Marketing has been a large part of my job since I started my business 16 1/2 years ago. If I see that our company's services are not necessarily a good fit, I'm more likely to tell a potential client not to use our services than to try to "hard sell" them. Incidentally, service is my real passion!

And although I spend a lot of time on a computer (day and night) and I'm married to an awesome computer guy, let's just say that "computer" is not a second language for me like it is for him. I guess that's one of the many reasons God gave him to me—to help me with my computer problems lol! (Even after 21 1/2 years of marriage, I'm blessed to still discover every day more of the many reasons God gave him to me.) Ahhh ... I digress ... Now back to my point ...

I'm sure many of you also find yourself doing something very different than what you might have had planned; using skills you didn't necessarily know you had; doing unexpected things that you feel that God has called you to do.

In the Bible, I'm sure Abraham's servant could relate. The servant was most likely one of the 318 servants who helped Abra-

ham free his nephew, Lot. Lot had been captured by four kings (Genesis 14). These four kings had battled five kings and came out victorious. They left after the battle taking with them the "plunder" of Sodom, along with Lot and all his possessions. Abraham and his servants tracked the kings down, conquered them and rescued Lot and his possessions.

Later in Chapter 24 of Genesis, Abraham called his oldest servant to him for a new assignment. This servant was in charge of everything Abraham had. About this time, the servant was probably feeling pretty confident.

I can only imagine what he must have been thinking: "Oh, Boy!! What great assignment does the master have for me this time? Maybe he'd like me to organize the servants to conquer another kingdom!!" ... Drum roll, please ...

Abraham's request: ... yes ... here it comes ... "I want you to find a wife for my son, Isaac."

"Excuse me, sir, what was that?" "You want me to do what?!?!"

Abraham wanted his servant to go to his homeland, play matchmaker and find him a daughter-in-law. "Hmmm..." Probably not exactly what the servant had in mind.

Even so, the servant was faithful and did exactly what his master told him to do. He loaded up the camels, ten to be exact, and headed out.

Sometimes our calling might be much different than what we thought it would be. Sometimes, it's just to go, to be available on the spur of the moment for "whatever" God calls us to do.

Maybe it's a life-long call of ministry. Maybe it's teaching a Bible study or a Sunday School class. It could be reading the story of Moses to a group of 4 year olds, crocheting a prayer shawl, calling a sick friend or sending an encouraging card. Maybe it's cleaning the kitchen or diapering a baby or just doing a good job at our job. At times we may have no idea how God is using us.

One thing is for sure, God doesn't always call the equipped, but He will always equip the called. We've just got to be willing to load up the camels!

John 14:12

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.



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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 to subscribe for a free email copy or please call or email us for paper copies.

Watch for information about the Grace In The Wilderness Women's Conference coming February 22-23, 2013 at Blue Ridge View Baptist Church in Pickens, SC

Check us out on Facebook— Grace In The Wilderness and at www.WildernessGrace.org

Faith in God includes faith in His timing. - Neal A. Maxwell

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