



Gracie's Way

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



Swallowing Frogs

Mark Twain once said, "Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day."

He also said, "If it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the biggest one first."

Eat a live frog!! Oh, no, I don't think so!! Gracie can't even stand to touch one!! She nearly threw up and passed out at the same time when her high school science class had to dissect frogs last fall. And that was just from having to lift a frog out of the canister with big tweezers!

You see, Gracie doesn't like any living "thing" that is naturally slimy, cold, bumpy and wet. She especially can't stand frogs. Call it a phobia that came from a childhood trauma ...

It all happened one sunny day when Gracie was about six years old. She and her big cousin, Joey (he was almost two whole years older than her), were playing together outside at their grandparents' house.

She and Joey loved to play tag and they would often

take turns chasing each other. This day was no exception and they were having such fun when things took a turn for the worst!

I bet you can already see where this is headed ... straight for trouble!! You see, there was only one game that Joey loved more than tag and that was "Horrorfy Gracie!"

All was going beautifully that morning as she chased Joey across the neatly mowed lawn in plain view of their moms and grandmother who were sipping lemonade on the screened in porch. Then his "zig zagged" and he darted into the woods. *Uh oh ...*

Even though she was hesitating on the inside, her outsidies never slowed down. And being the brave, adventurous girl she was, she headed straight into the woods after him as fast as her little legs would carry her.

As she chased him down by the stream at the back of the property, they startled a huge frog that leaped out of the water and up onto the bank. Without skipping a step, Joey saw a great opportunity to play his favorite

By Sharon Hawkins

game. He dove to his knees, captured the slimy monster, and then turned and started chasing Gracie with it. He was yelling that the frog was poisonous and if she didn't die from its bite, she would at least have warts all over her face and no boy would ever look at her. She ran all the way to her mom's arms screaming and crying big "crocodile" tears.

She never forgot that day and I bet Joey didn't either. He was the one crying the biggest "crocodile" tears when his mom got finished with him.

Gracie can certainly relate to Mark Twain's quote because eating a live frog would definitely be the worst point of any day for her. After that, things could only get better, right?

Don't you feel that way when something is hanging over your head that you really, really need to do, but you really, really, *REALLY* don't want to do it?

Do the hard stuff first then it's ALL easier after that!! Come on, you can do it!! *IT'S JUST A FROG ... !!!*

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Special points of interest:

- Watch for our Grace In The Wilderness Teen Conference EMPOWERED JESUS GIRL in November of 2013.
- We're on Facebook. Like our Grace In The Wilderness Page. Look us up...



Philippians 4:13
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.



Secrets

By Sammie Richards

My first recall of the word “secret” was when I was a child at the age of 10. My sister and I had been invited to attend a birthday party. Big deal, you might say! To me it was a big deal!

Our mother raised the last three children of six alone after our father had passed away when I was seven. She did this on three hundred dollars a month from a widow’s pension. This included food, clothing, power, water and phone. So since our mother never learned to drive, we were home 95% of the time. We walked to town when paying bills. We walked to elementary school and we walked to church.

Church was so exciting for me! We made many friends at church and one family had invited my sister and me to their youngest daughter’s birthday party. Our mom, after much begging, allowed us to attend. The party went like most parties—kids running, play-

ing and singing. My sister was older than me and she was friends with the older sister. I played outside while they were inside preparing the “Surprise Party”, the “secret”!

No one told me not to tell or to keep quiet so I did not know that I should have kept the secret. While playing, I thanked the younger sister for inviting me to her birthday party. That’s when I got into big trouble!

Her older sister started yelling at me and made me cry. So needless to say, I did not enjoy the rest of the party and did not want to attend another one for many, many years. That’s the first memory of keeping a secret and how painful secrets can be. Sometimes knowing when to keep secrets and knowing when to let secrets go can be a difficult task and sometimes it comes easy. Time and maturing helped to teach me when to keep secrets and when to let them go. Life does not come with instructions attached to our toes. When we are

born, we learn as we grow. Sometimes life teaches us the hard way.

On my graduation day, I got a Bible as a gift from my sister and a card I still have today. It simply said, “The answers to life’s questions can be found in here!” These are the only instructions we will ever need. So are the secrets you are keeping inside worth it? God already knows what they are.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Psalms 44:21

Shall not God search this out? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.



And The Chase Is On

By Brenda Horne

When the Lord allows me the privilege to write a story, it’s usually about life experiences, and as a result, a lot of the time, my poor family is the topic. I like to refer to these stories as “God’s Extraordinary Love in My Ordinary Life”.

Knowing this, I have another story for you. We have two sweet dogs, an adult German Short-Haired Pointer (who loves to chew up toys and bury them) and a cute Chihuahua puppy (who doesn’t mind very well).

It’s Sunday evening and time for church. My two dogs are playing out-

side and my husband tells my youngest daughter to bring in the dogs. She goes outside to call them. The Pointer comes to her but the puppy does not. And to make matters worse, every time she tries to get the puppy to come, she thinks she’s playing, and runs toward her just to dart away when she gets too close. After about 5 minutes of this little “keep away” game, my daughter is completely aggravated so she yells and asks her Daddy how to get the puppy to come to her.

My husband, with all his fatherly, dog training skills, tells her to throw her shoe at the puppy and scare it into the house. So my daughter takes off her suede boot with the fluffy, sheep

skin lining and hurls it at the puppy. This technique may have worked except our big German Pointer sees the boot flying across the yard and thinks it’s a chew toy for him. So he flies off the porch in one giant leap, catches the boot and proceeds to run toward the woods to either chew it to pieces or bury it in a secure location. Meanwhile, the little puppy sees what joy and fun the Pointer is having and chases after him instead of coming inside.

Well, as you can imagine, my daughter has completely lost her cool and is ready to take both dogs to the pound and have them euthanized. She comes inside, mad as a

And The Chase Is On (Cont'd)

By Brenda Horne

hornet and lets it be known to her father that if our Pointer chews up her shoe or buries it, the dog *will not* survive the consequences! And as far as the puppy, “let her little behind stay outside and freeze”, I believe was the comment.

Now this whole fiasco is being carried out while I’m in the bathroom getting ready for church. When I walk into the living room what I hear is, “Daddy stop laughing, it’s not funny, they are stupid dogs! And whatever you do, DON’T tell Mom because she will make a story out of it!!” To which I replied, “Make a story out of what?” I literally thought my husband was going to pass out from laughing so hard. My daughter on the other hand, did not see the humor in the situation.

My husband then proceeds to tell me

the whole story and I completely understand my poor daughter’s frustration. So the Mom in me steps in and decides to save the day... I hunted down the Pointer, retrieved the boot (before it was destroyed - YAY MOM) then scooped up the puppy and headed back inside to console my smoldering child. Once she calmed down and no longer wanted to murder my dogs, I was then able to burst out laughing. “Do you know how funny this is?” I asked. Slowly, she began to grin and whispered, “Ok, so maybe it’s a little funny!” Then I persuade her to let me write the story.

Francesca Batestelli sings a song that describes our frustrations perfectly. “This is the Stuff” ... This is the stuff that drives me crazy. This is the stuff that’s getting to me lately. In the middle of my little mess, I forget how big I’m blessed. This is the stuff that

gets under my skin, but I gotta trust You know exactly what You’re doing. It might not be what I would choose ... but this is the stuff You use.

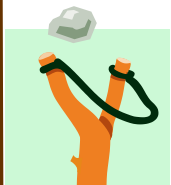
Frustrations are part of everyone’s daily life, and it’s our choice how we handle them.

Ephesians 4:26

“In your anger, do not sin.” Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Matthew 5:7

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.



Facing the Giants... Happiness and Joy

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING HAPPY AND HAVING JOY?

Happy is temporary, Joy is always there. Amanda, 15, 10th grade

Happiness is easily demolished. Joy is a little harder to destroy. Brandi, 14, 9th grade

Being happy is like being excited about something worldly, but joy is when Jesus comes in to your heart and saves you and you get peace. Mandalyn, 13, 8th grade

Being happy is where you are just excited. Joy is peace. Amber, 13, 7th grade

Joy is harder to destroy. Ashlyn, 13, 7th grade

Being happy is like when you get a box of chocolate and joy is like when you bring someone to the Lord. Jordan, 12, 6th grade

Happiness can fade fast but true joy is not dependent on circumstances. Anna, 18

Yes, happiness is temporary and fleeting. People chase happiness their entire lives, only to live a life of disappointment. Yet joy is given from the Lord, therefore it surpasses any life situation. Psalms 16:11 says “in the presence of the Lord is joy” and in Romans 15:13, “the God of hope will fill you with joy”.

When you give your life to Jesus Christ, He fills you with joy in believing, where hope and happiness abound.

Psalms 16:11

You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Romans 15:13

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.



God Is Love

By Kara Murrell

On the morning of June 12th, 2012, I sat in my tent in a remote village in the middle of West Africa having my quiet time with God. I had been reading through the New Testament and on that particular day I read 1 John. I had no idea how God was going to make that passage become real to me at the time, but by the end of the day he had made it very clear.

My “hut mate” and I went about our day as normal, working with the women and sharing the Gospel with them, when late in the afternoon we were invited into a compound where we had never been before. The women and children seemed nice and were attentive for the first part of the story, but then the atmosphere suddenly changed.

A young boy accidentally ran into a younger woman who was sitting leaned up against a mud wall as he walked by to stand with the other children. But she did not brush it off lightly as we hoped she would. She hit him across the face so hard that it sounded like she could have broken his jaw. The other women who were

in the compound started yelling at her and the children went wild as well. Two young boys began fist fighting about a foot in front of me, as I held the book.

At this point I wanted to leave because the environment had become so chaotic, but as we prayed in that moment, God told us to stay. Eventually the madness calmed, but it wasn't the same. The women were mocking us and the lady who had hit the child was showing no remorse for her actions. We were so frustrated.

I asked God, “How am I supposed to love these people? How do you love these people?” Quickly I received my answer. As I looked into their faces, I saw my own reflection. At that moment, I realized how dirty, cruel, selfish, and unlovable I was before I surrendered all my ashes to Jesus. I was just like them, yet the Father still chose me and because he loves me, I am called to love others. After a few more minutes the women told us to leave. I believe with all my heart God kept us there during the chaos for us to realize the depth of his love.

When we got back to our hut, I got my Bible and read 1 John again. God knew the course of my day before I ever woke up that morning and what

he taught me resonated with me the rest of my trip.

These people do not know love because they do not know God and in that moment I asked God to show me how to love the unlovable as he does. It definitely wasn't an easy road, but God truly changed my heart for those people within the next week. He gave me a better understanding of their culture and more importantly an urgency to share His love with them.

There will always be people in our lives, no matter where we are, who will be hard to love. But if we remember in those situations how unlovable we are and yet our Father sent His Son from Heaven to a dirty rotten world for us, it makes loving one another much easier.

How deep is the Father's love for us? “This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.” 1 John 4:10-12



The Process

By Sammie Richards

I heard a sermon once on how you've got to go through the process. The preacher talked about a butterfly and how its birthplace, its holding place, is a cocoon until it's time for it to fly.

The preacher demonstrated how the butterfly might wiggle and squirm to free itself. We all laughed as the preacher flopped and wiggled on

stage trying to show the struggle. The preacher then told how that if you cut a small slit to allow the butterfly to come out too soon, it would not be able to fly. It had to go through the process of nature so it could be thankful that it could fly.

It reminds me of my many struggles in life. At the time of some struggles, I wanted someone to help me. I felt as if I could not do it alone. Looking back now I see that if someone had made it

easier for me and I had avoided the process, I probably would not have found my thankfulness of going through the process.

Life has a beginning and life has an end! It's a process we all go through. We may never understand the whole process of our personal lives. We wonder sometimes why some people seem to have a smooth path, no visible struggles, and some people seem to stay on

The Process (Cont'd)

By Sammie Richards

rough ground and it's always a struggle.

I know that the process of life hurts badly sometimes, especially when you lose a loved one way too soon. Or it could be that you lost a precious pet. It could be you lost mobility from an injury or an accident, loss of a home, a job or a friend. It's all a process.

It's ok to cry, it's ok to yell. We are human and we have emotions and, yes, emotions are part of life's process. Believe me! If you have God in your heart, the process of life will not be as bad as it could be without Him. He will help you through the process. If you will listen to Him and put yourself aside, you might even learn from the process.

In the loss of my loved one whom I felt left me too soon, I am thankful for the time we shared, the love that was so sweet and so strong. The friendship we had and the moments we had kept me wanting more. God let me know life is a process and He taught me that my loved one was not

mine to keep. He belonged to Him but God loved me and He loved him enough to allow each of us to share the process of life together even if it was a short time.

Today, I deal with emotions of watching my precious friend, my little dog, struggle in his process of life. He celebrated his 15th birthday on September 26th. I know his process of life is getting closer to a finish. I am sad but also happy. I am thankful I have been blessed to be his caretaker, his playmate and his friend. I cry sometimes when I think about not having him to follow my every step. I won't have someone to save my last bit of food for. Even though I know our time together is short, I know for sure that when the time comes to say goodbye to my canine little boy, God will be there with me then as he is now. It will hurt and I will be sad but I am also certain I will feel a sense of gratitude for the time we had together, thankful I was a part of the process.

As I close I want to say I will remember each of you in prayer as you go

through the process of life. There will be loss of family members, friends, pets, jobs, homes and many things we will encounter during our process of life, but just know you can find your thankfulness in your process if you look hard enough. I want to be an example that, with God, you can be thankful. God is so good to us all, we owe Him our thankfulness. Remember, He does not have to let us be a part of the process.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; a time to be born, and a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance.

This God Guy

By Tiffany Chandler

Hey, I'm Tiffany Chandler and I'm new at this whole writing my feelings down thing. So please bear with me.

I'm a daughter, mother, sister, wife and friend. I have three amazing children who I hold so close to my heart and a wonderful husband who definitely makes my life complete. My life is pretty much perfect or as perfect as I would like it to be. I have an awesome family, amazing friends, and last but not least, I have GOD. God and I have been best friends for a long time, long before I even knew He existed.

You see, when I was little, my life

wasn't quite as perfect as it is now. My father was in and out of my life: partying, doing drugs, random girlfriends, etc.--you know, all of the more important things other than being my daddy, my leader. He was a good man though. I thought the world of him and never realized anything he did to my heart was wrong.

I remember sitting on our porch swing waiting and waiting for him to come and get me for the weekend but he never showed. I remember making excuses for him at a very young age to make it better for my mother. She always stayed so mad at him and I just write him letters and mail them, tell-

ing him how I felt and how bad I missed him. It didn't do any good. He blamed my mom and told her to quit putting me up to that kind of stuff.

My mother was a good mother. She did everything a single, 18-year-old mother could do to make sure I had the things I needed. She struggled with relationships though, and I never could understand if it was me, her, or us together as a team they didn't like. It always seemed that she was more interested in the ones I didn't like. I craved someone like my daddy. In the meantime she had a new baby, my little brother, Andrew. I was so excited and

This God Guy (Cont'd)

By Tiffany Chandler

thought that I finally had a normal life with a mommy, a daddy (even if he wasn't my real daddy), and a little brother. That didn't last long. He was one that I liked.

Due to the split, my mother and I went one way and my little brother and his daddy went another. It wasn't right that a little boy be raised by his single mother, or so that's what I was told. I missed him and every day of my life I would hope that somehow we could be together again. During all this chaos, I learned that my daddy had a new baby as well, my brother, Cory. I remember seeing him for the first time and I thought I had a new baby doll. He was the most amazing thing I had ever seen. I had an important role to play in these babies' lives but I couldn't. I could only see them when our parents had

us at the same time and I'm telling you what...that was hard to plan.

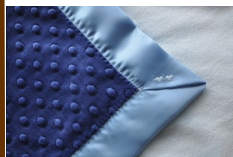
My mother began to date a guy whose parents were big into church, and they began to take me with them. This was so new to me. I knew that all of the little girls I went to school with, who seemed to have wonderful lives, had families that they went to church with. Again, I had something normal.

I began to learn about this guy named God and I was so thirsty to learn more. I was in Sunday School every week. I attended Girls Anonymous every Wednesday. We did little mission trips and I now had friends that knew me by going to church with them. I accepted Christ at the age of 6. I was content; for once in my little life, I was happy. That didn't last long

either. My mother and this guy separated and that was the last I saw the people that I had grown so close to.

Every day of my life I have thought about those people and what an impact they had on me. I knew that they were special angels that God brought into my life to introduce me to Him. I was only a member of that church for a short time, maybe a year or two, but in that time I learned a lot.

I knew that this God guy would take good care of me. He was my best friend and if no one else cared about making Tiffany happy or teaching Tiffany things, God did... and that was all I needed to embrace this wonderful adventure I call life.



Insecurities

Where is your security? Where does your blanket come from? Maybe these seem like silly questions to you. Security is defined as anything that makes you feel safe and offers some sort of protection.

At different times in life, securities come from varying places. As a child, it comes from the right toys or a pony or a puppy. In high school, it comes from the right boy asking you out for the Friday night football game, and driving your new car down the back roads and the sense of freedom that brings you. In college, often it comes from education and your grades. And as we get older and grow into adulthood, money is where securities often lie.

Do you see a common thread here? The thread is no matter what you have, you always want something more or different. If you get the puppy, you want the horse. If you get

the 1992 Toyota Corolla, you want the car your best friend has, a 2005 Honda Civic. If you make \$50,000 a year you want \$75,000. When you finally get the things you have wanted your whole life, do they satisfy? I mean truly satisfy? Or somewhere deep is there that hole? You know the one I am talking about, the one that your heart longs to have filled.

That desire looks different for all of us. For me for a long time, my hole was the desire for sisters. It overtook me. I could pretend all day long that with a horse or a marriage, my heart would one day be fulfilled. Many times people think that marriage is what their hearts are truly longing for. What is the common ground of the desire for sisters and for a marriage? The desire to know someone loves you intimately and for you to know and love someone.

Psalms 139:13 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me to-

gether in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." He is perfect and full which means that my life is full in him. He knew me before there was time. If that isn't intimacy, I don't know what is. He has a plan for my life that only I can fulfill.

One of my favorite songs says, "You were made to fill a purpose only you could fill so there could never be a more beautiful you." We are so beautiful and so loved but often-times we focus on what we do not have instead of what we do have. We might focus on the desire for a sister when we are, as believers, a part of the largest family in the history of the world being coheirs in Christ. We might focus on the fact that we are so "poor" that we can't travel to see the Amazon but we never have to wonder where our next meal is coming from.

By Shauna Swanberg

Insecurities (Cont'd)

By Shauna Swanberg

We don't realize what poor really means. Do you realize that if you make \$30,000 a year you make more than 95% of the world? Isaiah 30:18 reminds us that "the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion...." That is beautiful! He longs to bring us the desires of our hearts and bring compassion. He longs to hold our hearts and protect them. He will love us, not for who we want to be, but for who we are today.

Security is where you find your shelter in the time of the storm. Where

do you go in the storm?

The first words God ever spoke to us was "you are free" in Genesis 2:16. Hebrews 11:40 says, "God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."

We all want to feel as though we have a purpose, as if our lives are not wasting away. What a beautiful promise!

Often securities come from things we think we will find fulfillment in. But has your pony, car or pay raise helped

you to truly feel secure? Are you yearning for something more? If you find yourself always thinking one more relationship, one more pay raise, one more _____ will leave you feeling satisfied. Think again. Has it worked so far? It probably won't work this time either.

Jesus will give us everything we need and will love us for who we are today, not for who we hope to be one day.



From A Guy's Perspective: Resolutions

By Taylor Hawkins

Every year, we hear about new year's resolutions. Here's one that we all need to try: Spend more time with God. No matter how much time you already do spend with Him, you could always use more.

As teenagers, it seems like we're always thinking about having boyfriends or girlfriends. Many our age even make getting in a relationship their

new year's resolution. The problem is, if we try to find someone without letting Jesus be the center of what we're looking for, what we find won't be good for us.

My challenge for you is to date Jesus this coming year. Talk to Him all day, every day. If He lives in your heart, He's already there. You don't have to have a formal prayer to talk to Him. You don't even have to say "amen" at

the end of a prayer; just talk to Him. Read the love letter that He's already written you in the Bible. He loves you more than any boy ever could... Love Him back and let Him show you true love. He proved how much He loves you on the cross 2000 years ago. Forget about searching for a boy. The Lord will place the right guy in your life if you trust Him to.



From A Girl's Perspective: Perseverance and Commitment

By Reid Long

About this time of year, people are trying to figure out what their new year resolution is going to be. Maybe you want to lose weight, change your attitude, give more to charity, make it to church on time, get in church, restore broken relationships, grow closer to God, or to just be a more positive person.

Sadly, the truth is we either forget about our commitment or get tired of trying before we can even get

through the first few months of the year. Whatever it may be, do it with boldness. Never give up. Build endurance.

Let Jesus be your hope. Let Him be your role model. Though obstacles were thrown in His way during His life on earth, He used the Word of God as His sword and God as His shield. With integrity and persistence he committed to God's will for years. YEARS! He kept looking up to keep moving forward. I believe Jesus took time out of the picture.

He didn't want to get caught up in how long something would take. He just did it. He didn't look down at his watch, but he looked up to God for direction and patience. So no matter what God lays on your heart to commit to this year, don't be scared of the consequences, stakes, or effort it may take in order to achieve these things.

Remember, God did not give us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)



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 and Teen Girl. Our mission is to encourage women and teen girls:

-To look upward to God as they discover Him in a new and deeper way,

-To look inward as they discover who they are in Christ, and

-To look outward as they discover God's plan for their lives.

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

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*Grace In The Wilderness Teen Conference
EMPOWERED JESUS GIRL
November 16, 2012
at Blue Ridge View Baptist Church,
Pickens, SC*

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You've never lived until you've lived by faith. —John Waller

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