

# Gracie's Way

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

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## Mirror, Mirror

By Sharon Hawkins

“Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?” Snow White’s wicked stepmother would ask the palace mirror this question over and over again.

She was looking for the mirror to validate her beauty, to validate her worth. Then one day it stopped giving her the answer she wanted. She wasn’t the fairest anymore. And ... well, let’s just say ... she was more than a little devastated!

Every day girls of all ages are still asking mirrors to judge their beauty and their worth. Gracie is no exception.

Sometimes as Gracie looks into the mirror, it taunts her, it lies to her, and it whispers, “You’ll never be good enough, not even close ...”

Unfortunately, the social well-being of today’s teen girl can depend largely upon her perception of her personal image and identity.

And rejection is the worst! Like other teen girls, when Gracie feels rejected by a group, she can feel the deep stress of inadequacy that can take over her life.

Many teens spend a great deal of time focusing on how others are viewed, and it can get in the way of their finding out who they really are themselves.

Gracie often feels insecure about her appearance and body image as she compares herself to other girls. She also compares herself to them athletically, musically, scholastically, in popularity and in countless other ways.

If only she could realize that just because she is different from someone else doesn’t mean that there is something wrong with her!

Oh no, actually, it is just the opposite! She is a rare and beautiful treasure and she is deeply loved by the Lord God Almighty. So loved in fact that He gave His life as a living sacrifice for her!

She is like the pearl of great value from the Bible that the merchant went searching for. Matthew 13:46 says, “who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

In nature, a pearl starts out as an irritant, a tiny grain of sand that works its way into an oyster. The muscle of the

oyster coats the tiny particle over and over again until a beautiful creation is formed.

God can create beauty from a girl’s heartaches and feelings of inadequacy and use them to grow her, to polish her and to make her into His beautiful masterpiece ... not unlike His precious pearl ... or His breathtaking butterfly.

A quote by an unknown author says, “When you find yourself cocooned in isolation and cannot find your way out of the darkness, remember that this is similar to the place where caterpillars go to grow their wings.”

The Bible tells us that God will meet all our needs. He feeds the birds of the air and clothes the grass with the splendor of lilies. How much more, then, will He care for us, who are made in His image? (Charles Stanley)

Who’s the fairest of them all? There’s no question, that would be Jesus!!! But today’s teen girl is created in His image and He “don’t make no junk”! He wants her to be true to herself and to be a beautiful reflection of Him!

## 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...



## Genesis 1:27

*So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*



## Freedom

By Shauna Swanberg

“You are free.” What could we do to stop them? This is my first step in stopping them.

These were the first words ever spoken to us as human beings. You need to know and so do your friends. God is a God of community so we can only do this with our communities’ help and relationships. We can stop sex trafficking and slavery today.

What does this show you? What do you think of it?

If I told you that many, many people your own age are not free, what would you say? Young girls just like yourself get taken everyday.

There is a huge group of people out there not only in foreign countries but also here in your backyard all over Spartanburg, Pickens and Greenville Counties that take young people away from their moms and dads and use them, abuse them, rape them and take advantage of them.

The first steps it took for the underground railroad were people who were free—both people who had been in their shoes (most black people) and those who had never been in their shoes but knew it was wrong (most white people).

These people stepped up to do their part to end slavery and help the slaves gain their freedom. Now it is our turn 200 years later to free young men and women all across the globe.

What’s your calling? How can you help? Tell everyone you know about the problem and the rest is up to them.

“You are free” are three words with meaning that speak volumes. Jesus told us He came to free the world and die for our freedom from sin. God told us we are free and now it is our turn to free these brothers and sisters.

### Galatians 5:1

*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*



## Facing the Giants... Qualities in a Guy

By Brenda Horne

GUY?

WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A

The Holy Spirit has given us the “Fruits of the Spirit” so why not look for those same qualities in a guy: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control.

not want to be bound to someone who does not believe what you believe.

The qualities I look for in a guy are to be a nice Christian fellow who is respectful, has a good sense of humor and is caring.—Emily

Also, 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”

**Galatians 5:22-23**  
*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...*

I like guys who are tall, handsome, Christians and who like me for who I am. - Jordan

The definition of a “yoke” is a wooden beam, normally used between a pair of oxen or other animals to enable them to pull together on a load when working in pairs.

**Galatians 5:25**  
*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

I am interested in guys who are Christ seeking. I like for them to be funny but not awkward. I also want him to be a gentleman, smart and kind. - Brett

The qualities I’m interested in are guys who love the Lord and have a heart for missions. I would like him to be family oriented, sweet and thoughtful. - Alyssa

In other words, you do not want to be bound to someone who is pulling in one direction while you are headed in the other direction. You do

## Believing

By Sharon Hawkins

This was the third night this week he had gone to bed hungry. He knew his mom was doing all she could to provide for the two of them. It was going to get better. He was believing.

It had been hard since his dad had left. This was the fourth night this week he had heard his mom cry herself to sleep. That was four nights too many. There isn't a lonelier sound in the world for a young teenage boy than to hear his mom cry, knowing he is powerless to help her.

He wanted to go to her, to comfort her but he couldn't figure out what he could say to make her feel any better. So he did all he knew to do, he prayed. He asked God to help his mom, to help them. He poured his heart out to the Lord as tears spilled onto his pillow.

The next morning as he rushed to get ready for school, he passed through the kitchen and saw his mom sitting at the head of the table, her head in her hands leaning over a stack of

bills. He stopped dead in his tracks.

Okay, he had to do something even if it was wrong. He walked over to her and gently touched her shoulder. She looked up at him with swollen, tear-filled eyes. She stood up and threw her arms around him and sobbed into his shoulder. He whispered to her, afraid to speak out loud in case it wasn't the right thing to say. "Mom, it's going to be okay. God and I had a talk about all this last night and I'm believing."

She backed up and put her hands on his shoulders. Then she gave him a "Wow, I'm so proud of you!" smile. His faith had been just the jolt she had needed.

"Okay, if you are believing, then so am I!" She squarely kissed him on his forehead as he headed off to catch the bus.

That evening he was just finishing his homework as his mom came in the door with a big bag of groceries. She

had a huge grin on her face. As she put away the groceries, she said, "You're never going to believe what happened today!" Then she stopped and giggled.

"Well ... yeah ... I guess you would. Hey, what exactly did you and God talk about last night?"

### Mark 11:22-23

*And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*



## Living With Purpose

"Every day may not be perfect but it is full of purpose". Kirk Franklin

How do you start each day? Do you wake with an attitude of gratitude or do you wake with a dread of what the day may bring? Each day is a new beginning. We can't control the events that happen in our lives but we can do things that will ensure that we live life with a purpose.

1. Start each day with a prayer of thankfulness. Before getting out of bed, thank God for everything in your life. Now, I know that everything that happens is not good. You may know someone who is fighting cancer, is

without a job, or you may be dealing with the loss of a loved one. But even through the most difficult times, there are things to be thankful for ... family, friends, your church, clothes, food, or something as simple as the sunshine :)! At first, you may find this difficult. But when you begin to practice this each day, you will be amazed at all the blessings in your life. This is a great way to help you develop a positive attitude!

2. Smile. Something as simple as a smile can completely change your day. Smiling is associated with happiness. When someone smiles at you, you smile back. (Well, most of us do!) Just try it! Tomorrow when you see someone, share a sincere smile. You

never know how that simple little act can uplift someone. That someone just might be you!!!

3. Compliment someone. It's always nice when someone shows a true appreciation of something we have done. It works in reverse too. Take the time to compliment someone on a job well done, a new haircut or a great new outfit they may have on. Compliments definitely should not be insincere but a few well meaning compliments can work wonders in making your day much happier.

4. Do something nice for someone. Do you have an elderly neighbor who is unable to take their trash

By Marie Pritchett

## Living With Purpose (Cont'd)

By Marie Pritchett

cans to the road on trash day? Is there a homeless shelter in your community who could use some volunteers a few hours a month? Or do you have a friend who is going through a really hard time at home? You could do a simple act that costs you absolutely nothing but will be more appreciated than any amount of money. Doing something nice for someone else not only helps them but it also helps your spirit soar!!!

5. Don't be a "Debbie-Downer". It is so easy to complain about all our problems. It's rainy and my hair is frizzy, it's hot and I am sweaty, I'm not as pretty as so and so, I can't buy that new outfit I want. The list goes on and on!!! Try to spend one day as an anti-complainer. If you are tempted to complain, stop yourself

and decide if the complaint is truly necessary. 99.9% of the time, the answer will be no. You can completely change a conversation from a complaint session to an uplifting, encouraging talk. Avoid complaining whenever possible!!!

6. Surround yourself with happy people. People with a positive attitude help us to have positive attitudes too. Who is the happiest person you know? No one is going to be happy all the time but think of the person who lifts you up. Try to catch some of their happiness for yourself :)! Surround yourself with people who laugh easily, have a constant smile and have a positive attitude on life.

7. Do unto others. The Bible is a perfect place to start for good advice on

how to get through life with a better attitude and to live a much happier life. Luke 6:31 is a great place to start, "Do to others as you would have them do to you".

By doing these few simple things you can begin to live a life with purpose!

### Proverbs 16:3

*Commit your work to the LORD,  
and your plans will be established.*



## Celebrate Good Times, Come On...

By Brenda Horne

There are milestones in our lives we all celebrate with great joy. For instance, we reach a major mile stone when we turn 13 years old. (Oh yeah, teenagers rule!!)

Then we turn 15—the big Learner's Permit. (Look out people, I'm officially behind the wheel!)

Next is 16—the coveted Driver's License (Okay, so it took two tries to pass the written test but still .... freedom at last!)

And finally 18—GRADUATION! (I can't believe I made it and neither can my Mom!!) You have probably already reached some of these milestones or you are well on your way to reaching them.

We all know (young and old) that these are the times to celebrate. But have you ever wondered if Jesus celebrates these moments with you? Does

He *really cares* that you are now a teenager? Does it matter to Him whether or not you get your Learner's Permit?

The answer is: **Yes**, Jesus celebrates *with* you, but more importantly, He celebrates You, whatever the accomplishment, He celebrates YOU!

He knows everything about you, even the number of hairs on your head. He loves you so much and you give Him such joy that He died for you! So yes ... Jesus does care every time you reach a wonderful point in your life.

But here's the real question: *Do you celebrate with Him?*

When you reached the big 1-3, you are now officially a teenager. You are no longer a child; you are a teenager who demands respect from any annoying "non-teen". But did you stop to ask God, how He could use you now that you are someone in authority? Or did you even think about Jesus at all ?

What about your Learner's Permit or Driver's License? Did you celebrate with God for helping you pass the tests? Did you ask Him for safety on the road? Did you use this new found freedom to drive yourself to church or did you rush to the mall that Sunday morning to celebrate, forgetting Jesus even existed?

And then there's 18, you are now an adult. What are you going to do with Jesus now?? Will you celebrate your accomplishments with Him and ask for His guidance in your new adult life or will you say "Ok, I'm done with you Jesus, I'm an adult now, it's time to start my own life."

Celebrating the goals you reach in life is awesome. But don't forget Jesus in the process, because without Him, life will not be worth celebrating ... even when you have it all.

## Decisions

By Erin Durham

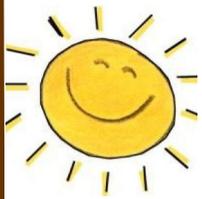
Sometimes the most important decisions we will make in life are the ones made at a time when we are the most confused. The teen years are most definitely difficult in many ways. We are coming into our own while being constantly pulled in different directions. Influences, both positive and negative, present themselves at every turn and we have to choose which roads to take and which ones to avoid.

It's very easy to find ourselves taking the wrong road in hopes of finding a shortcut, only to realize that it's a dead end! There is no huge lesson to be learned in this particular article. No dramatic stories of lessons learned

the hard way, or any one particular circumstance that opened my eyes to which road I should travel. You see, the truth is when you become a child of God, and learn that He has a purpose and a plan for each and every one of us, the choices we should make become much clearer!

Choosing the way of the Lord does not guarantee a life of happiness. It doesn't promise that hard times will not fall upon you and temptation will not follow you. Choosing the Lord Jesus Christ and accepting the free gift of salvation that He has given to you, to all of us, simply means that you belong to Him. And when you belong to him, no evils of this world can take

away the promise you have in Him of eternal life. This world, and all former things shall pass away but He shall remain! God will never leave you or forsake you. He, through the Holy Spirit, will lead you and guide you through the trials of this life. He will hold you close and never let you go. When everything and everyone seems to fail you, his love never will. Always choose the road less traveled and do not fear, for the Lord Jesus Christ will remain with you through everything. "My chains are gone, I've been set free. My God my Savior has ransomed me. And like a flood, his mercy rains, unending love, amazing grace!"



## Summer Is Coming

A lot of you are making plans to spend more time with your friends, maybe take a beach vacation with your family or just catch up on some much needed sleep. While planning your summer, have you thought about what you can do for God?

Maybe you think "I am too young." Or, "What could I possibly do that would make a difference?" Well, to answer your question there is A LOT you can do!!! Have you thought about going on a mission trip, volunteering at a local food pantry, starting a Bible study with your friends or holding a backyard Bible club for the kids in your neighborhood?

Mission Work- A lot of people think of mission trips as going to a foreign country but you can do mission work in your own community. Do you have an elderly neighbor who may need some yard work done or would simply love a visit? Do you know a single

mom who could use a few hours out? What about organizing a youth work day at your church or for a member of your community?

Volunteering- You could volunteer at a local food pantry, a homeless shelter or offer to read stories to children who are in the hospital. Volunteering is a way of giving back to others. But usually you end up getting the biggest reward.

Bible Study- You could start a Bible study. Find a devotional that you really like and share it with your friends. Plan a time each week where you discuss what you have learned and how God spoke to you through this lesson.

Try something new- Ask a parent or youth leader to help you find someone who would be willing to teach you and your friends a new craft (sewing, cooking, jewelry making or crocheting). Or start a fitness group then share a devotion at the beginning of

each class. It is a lot of fun learning new things and being able to share the love of Jesus at the same time.

Backyard Bible Club- Make a flyer and deliver to all the kids in your neighborhood. Organize games, snacks and a time to share Jesus with them. This can be a lot of fun! Can you imagine how awesome it will be to plant the seeds of Jesus' love with these young children!

The possibilities are endless! Enjoy your time with your family and friends but don't forget to also schedule time to make a difference for God!

By Marie Pritchett

### Isaiah 49:6

*"I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."*

## From A Guy's Perspective: True Love

By Taylor Hawkins



As a Christian, it seems like I'm always hearing non-believers talk about how they can't see how a loving God could send people to Hell. People going to Hell has nothing to do with God sending them there.

Think about it; God is so perfect. His perfection is so immense and majestic that we could never begin to imagine its depth.

God knows EVERYTHING. He knows every letter in every word in every sentence on every page in every book or conversation in every language that has ever been said or written. God knows the location of every atom on every planet in the entire universe and exactly where each one was since the moment He created everything. His wisdom and knowledge are beyond all comprehension.

When Adam and Eve sinned, we were separated from Him so far that we could never do anything good enough

to have the privilege of being with Him. All it takes is one sin. God's righteousness and goodness are so great that one single wrong makes us too filthy and evil to know him.

That's where Jesus comes in. God didn't want us to be separated from Him. That wasn't His plan at all. He created us and loves us infinitely. That love is so deep that He came down to earth to die for us so that we wouldn't have to spend eternity separated from Him in Hell. He isn't being cruel and unjust by allowing people to go to Hell. (In fact, He doesn't allow them to; they make the decision when they reject His gift of salvation.) He is being more merciful and forgiving than we could ever imagine by giving us a way out of eternal torment through His perfect sacrifice in Jesus.

Imagine you are a murderer that has just been sentenced to death. You have no hope of freedom and know you will die. Then the judge speaks up and says that he loves you so much that he is going to die in your place.

You are dumbfounded. You don't even know him, but he is willing to die for you. That's what Jesus does for every one of us. He died in shame and agony in our places. He lived a perfect life and shouldered the sin of the entire world in His death. His love is unimaginable, His grace is breathtaking, and His forgiveness is unmatched.

The God of everything came down to this sin-filled and fallen world to die for you and me. I will never be able to understand that kind of love. I am ashamed to say that I take Him for granted way too much. We all do. We could never express enough thankfulness no matter how hard we try. That's the beauty of His gift. He gave us His everything, and all He wants from us is a relationship. He wants our love. How humbling. He wants a filthy, sinful failure like me. I'm forever in debt to Him, but at the same time, I'm not in debt to Him because He's already paid it in full. That's True Love.

## From A Girl's Perspective: R-E-S-P-E-C-T

By Reid Long



Respect is not something you automatically receive from someone. Respect is earned over time.

It's not necessarily just something you give to older people or to someone who has authority over you. It can be given to your peers.

Whether someone is right or wrong you must respect them. You don't

have to agree with them but you should respect their opinion.

A good way to earn respect is to listen to others. Sometimes just hearing what people have to say instead of telling them what you think can earn respect.

I think the biggest key to respect is having integrity. Let your walk match your talk. Keep your word. Don't let your words and actions contradict themselves. Speak the truth and walk by faith.

To give advice you must apply the advice to your own life. And the best source to get your advice from is the Bible. It's the best source to live by.

### Philippians 2:3

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*



## Grace In The Wilderness Ministries

139 Commons Way  
Greenville, South Carolina 29611

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

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

### FOCUS SCRIPTURE VERSE:

Isaiah 43:19

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

Grace In The Wilderness is an out-reach ministry for Today's Busy Woman 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).

This is a free bi-monthly email newsletter. To subscribe for an electronic or paper copy, please just call or email us.

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

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[www.WildernessGrace.org](http://www.WildernessGrace.org)

*A tree falls the way it leans. Be careful which way you lean. –The Lorax*

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**Greenville, SC 29611**