

Gracie's Way

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



Even Me

If ever there was a Barney Fife in the Bible, it was Gideon. While Barney's on TV Land, Gideon's story is in Judges 6-8. Rather than being a lawman like Barney, Gideon was an Israelite farmer. Gideon's people had turned their backs on God and the Bible says that, "for seven years, He (God) gave them into the hands of the Midianites." (Judges 6:1) The people cried to the Lord for help.

The Midianites were big bullies and, among other things, they would wait till the Israelite people harvested their crops and then come and steal them.

When it came time to thresh his wheat, Gideon didn't go to the wide open spaces at the top of the mountain as one normally would where the wind could help him by blowing the husks away when the grain was tossed into the air. No, he was afraid that the Midianites could see him up there so he found a pit down in the ground called a winepress to thresh his wheat, there he would be hidden. There the angel of the Lord came to him.

The angel told him, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior!" "Huh, who? me?" Gideon replied that his tribe was the weakest and he was the runt of the litter. The angel ignored his excuses and told him to go and save the people from the Midianites. You know he was thinking, "Yeah, right!," Gideon was petrified. I can just see him

shaking as his eyes bulged out like Barney's.

He asked for a sign that this was really the Lord speaking to him. So the angel simply put his staff on Gideon's offering and obliterated it. Barney, I mean Gideon, still didn't have confidence that God could use him to save his people so he asked for another sign. He told the angel he would put out a sheep skin and if dew was on it in the morning and the ground was dry, then he would know God would use him. Next morning, the wool was wet and the ground dry. It was still not enough. Gideon asked for another sign. The next morning, if the ground was wet and the wool dry, then he would know that God could use 'even him.' And, of course, God answered, "Yes" again by granting his request.

So Gideon rounded up the Israelite Army, 32,000 strong. The Lord said that was too many so He dwindled the number down to 10,000 then down to just 300. Then He sent them into battle armed only with trumpets and jars with torches in them behind their fearless leader, Gideon (yeah, right!). (Hey, wait a minute, even Barney got to carry a bullet in his pocket!) The Lord thundered and through this little mighty group, He "nipped the Midianites right in the bud."

Gracie Ankles, Today's Busy Teen, needs a double shot of courage to survive in Today's World. Her wilderness is defi-

nately not for the "faint of heart." But, unfortunately, often she can so relate to Gideon and to Barney. She so wants to be fearless, but sometimes she's really scared to death—scared of being laughed at, of being hurt, of being a failure.

Zig Ziglar said, "Remember that failure is an event, not a person." The devil would have us believe we are failures and not worthy. Don't believe his lies!!!

We fear who we believe is in charge of what happens to us. If we have accepted God's gift of salvation, we are His children. If we believe that He is in charge of what happens to us, then we have nothing to fear, do we? He is a gentle Father who loves us enough to die for us, in fact, that's exactly what He did!!!

Just like Gideon, with God on her side, Today's Busy Teen, can face her fears, her enemies, her shortcomings and her hard times with confidence. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." "For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7) Through Him, you can be an Empowered Jesus Girl!!!

So the next time you're feeling afraid, just remember, just like with Gideon, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior!" Yes, 'even you'!!!

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Special points of interest:

- Watch for our Grace In The Wilderness Teen/College Age Girl Conference in October of each year.
- We're on Facebook. Become a fan of the Grace In The Wilderness Page. Look us up...



**Judges 6:23
But the LORD said to him (Gideon), "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die."**



You Have Purpose

By Reid Long, 17

Have you ever felt like a third wheel? Do you feel like you have no purpose? Think about it. To have a tricycle you must have three wheels. That third wheel has purpose. The third wheel actually steers the tricycle.

God has purpose for everyone and everything. Sometimes it's hard to see it, but I can promise you that your life and the events that take place in it are valuable. We are all a part of God's body! Whether it be his hands, his feet, or even his nose, all of us are equally important! If your

feeling like you don't belong anywhere or you aren't anything special... think again!

In the Bible, a Jewish girl named Esther realized she had purpose. She had heard that King Ahasuerus was going to kill all the Jews in the Persian Empire so she wanted to stop him. The king had recently taken her as his new wife. Esther was brave enough to go see the king without permission, (which is not wise even for the queen) and told him that his order to kill the Jews would extend to her. King Ahasuerus overturned the order!

A Jewish woman had become queen and protected God's people! Wow!

Like I said WE are God's body and if you are just sitting there and not fulfilling your purpose, God's body isn't functioning completely. So get up and go! Let people know about Jesus! Tell others that you live to serve the Lord and spread his love and mercy. Now that's purpose!

Esther 4:14 "...And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"



Facing the Giants...

By Brenda Horne

I am a Christian. I have friends that are homosexual. How should I treat them? And can we still be friends since I am a Christian?

I think you should pray for them and talk to them about it. And yes you could stay friends with them but remember you are known by your association. Heather, 14-8th grade

none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Some of us were once like that. But we were cleansed; we were made holy; we were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

We say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is good for us. And even though, "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything.

I would treat them the same. They are just human. I would stay friends with them and try to ask them and figure out what they are going through. As Christians we are supposed to help and bring others up, not tear them down and judge them. Jenni, 14-9th grade

Homosexuality is wrong. The Bible is very plain about that. **Yet we must remember we are sinners also. Our sin is not better than theirs.**

There is a saying, "Love the sinner, hate the sin." The Bible commands over and over to "Love your neighbor as yourself" and to "Love one another."

It does not say to judge, hate, ridicule, mock, ignore, torment or despise...the Bible clearly says to *love*.

Once we realize **WE ALL** fall short of the glory of God, and we ALL must call upon the name of Jesus to be cleansed from every sin. then we can truly pray for our friends as we pray for our own sins.

*Peter 4:8
Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*

I would treat them like a normal person. Also I would make them aware that I don't agree but I still like or even love them. I would still want to be their friend to show them and be a Christian example. But honestly it freaks me out. Madison, 16-10th grade

The Bible says it best of all:

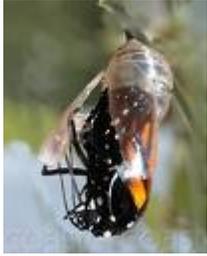
1 Corinthian 6:9-12

Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—

*Galatians 5:14
The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

You should treat them with love and tell them about God, to plant a seed in their hearts. Yes, you can still be friends with them, but you should not support their sin. Brett, 17-11th grade

You need to show them in a gentle way that it's wrong, try to reach out to them and show them what the Bible says about it. Treat them as you always have, but show them it's wrong to be that way. Savannah 14-8th grade.



The Cocoon

A man found a cocoon for a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through the little hole.

Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and could go no farther. Then the man decided to help the butterfly.

He took a pair of scissors and snipped the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily.

Something was strange. The butterfly had a swollen body and shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected at any moment the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time.

Neither happened. In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and deformed wings. It was never able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand, was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the small opening of the cocoon are God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butter-

fly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life.

If God allowed us to go through all our life without any obstacles, that would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been.

Not only that, we could never fly. (Author unknown)

Heartaches and hurts are never easy but Romans 8:28 says, "That in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose." (NKJV)

As we are going through trials of this life it is hard to see how anything good could possibly come out of it. How could there be anything good in losing a person you love, someone being diagnosed with cancer or your parents telling you they are getting a divorce? Your whole world is turned upside down and inside out. The ONLY way to survive a crisis is to cling to the one who died for us.

It may not be easy and you may even be having a hard time praying. But when we can't pray for ourselves there will be others praying for us. There are no shortcuts through a trial or heartache. We just have

By Marie Pritchett



to face it head-on with our eyes on Jesus.

Once we experience a trial in our life we can use what we learned through our pain to help others or have more compassion for those who may be going through the same thing. Or sometimes just allowing God to work in our lives will encourage someone who may be going through a trial themselves. We have a choice... we can choose to let our hurt destroy us or we can use it to make us a stronger, more caring and compassionate person.

So what do you choose? When a trial comes your way, will you spend the rest of your life "crawling on your belly?" Or, will you spread your wings and fly like the beautiful butterfly God intended you to be?



By Ashlyn Skelton



Christ Lives

Each Day as I drove to school I passed that tree. It stood all alone in the middle of a big, open field. At first, it was just another tree, but over time it became important to me.

One particular day, I pulled my car over and walked over to the tree, sat down to read a book under it. I noticed it was a dogwood tree. It had perfect white flowers. Each flower had four petals. Each petal had a small brown stain on its edge. In the middle of each flower, there was a bundle of thorn-like spuds. The tree was beautiful.

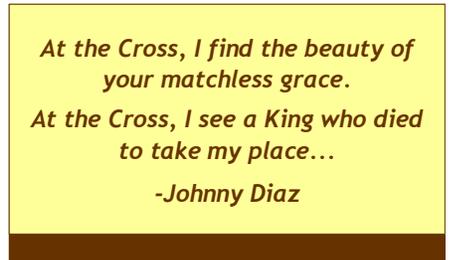
As I sat under it and really studied the flowers, I realized they reminded me of the cross. Each flower had a cross shape. The brown stain represented the blood Christ shed for me. The bundle in the middle symbolized the crown of thorns he wore around his head.

At that moment, a sense of peace came over me, almost like the tree was putting out a hedge of protection around me. It was very hard to explain the wonderful breath-taking feeling that surrounded me.

Then I prayed to God, thanking him for showing me this magnificent tree. I thanked him for everything he has blessed

me with in my life. I am so thankful for his works and I strive to live daily by his Word.

This tree is a reminder every day that Jesus Christ is watching over me.





No Limits

By Savannah McCollum, 14

My name is Savannah Victoria McCollum. I am fourteen years old. I attend Elljean Baptist Church, love the beach, love to read, enjoy lis-

tening to all kinds of music like most of you. And by the way, I happen to have a learning disability! The definition of "disability" is the condition of not being able or fit to do something or limiting what one can do. Well, I don't believe that definition, not anymore anyway!

My first experience in first grade was when I couldn't read a lick! Seriously, I could not read even though everyone else in my class could. That same year, we left public school to go to a small private, Christian school so my Mom could teach part time because my Grammy was very sick and dying from cancer. At that school, I decided to go through first grade again, and still had a lot of trouble reading.

Finally, my family decided to have me tested for any learning problems and that is when we found out about my learning disability. The lady who tested me said it was something that would always be part of who I am, I would never outgrow the disability, but I would find new and different ways to learn things.

We also learned some ways to help me with reading, spelling and writing and we tried all of them. By second grade, I was doing a little better, but I always thought I must just not have a "normal" brain like everyone else! I was never comfortable about my disability and was embarrassed a lot when I messed up on speaking or reading.

There were a lot of things I just didn't try because I thought I couldn't do them.

This past year has been good for me because I have tried some new things that I never would have tried before. First of all, I read all the time! I love books about history especially. I have even started singing with our youth ensemble at my church in front of everyone. To catch up with the grade level I would have been in now, I completed pretty much two grades this year while home schooling! So, I completed seventh and eighth grades so that I would be a little more confident

about myself.

My sister, Samantha, started a girls' Bible study once a week. I didn't think much about it when she planned the study, but once I started reading through the book, and the Bible verses that went with the units each week, I got excited! I was in love with the study and it was awesome spending time with God more than ever and with the girls that came to the study.

The study got me to thinking that maybe God had given me this disability for a reason. We were talking about how God made us all different and able to serve him. We also talked about how what we do now, that it can reflect on our future.

So, I started thinking that instead of feeling bad about myself, that maybe I should use those feelings to talk to other people with disabilities or just encourage them.

Sometimes I get frustrated with people who don't have disabilities who choose not to work to their full potential! Everything I do, I have to work that much harder at it to be successful or good at something. I just don't understand people that are lazy about doing things.

Another thing that happened this year is that a new family came to our Church, the Wimpeys. Brandon is our new Outreach Minister and he and his wife Leah and their baby are so nice. They love God and our Church and Church family so much and I love to be around them.

He is such a good man of God. I found out that he has a learning disability too. Wow! This was amazing to me to see how great he does things for the church and our community, and he does it all, even with a disability!

Another person that makes such a difference in my life is Stacy. She is so precious and smart and beautiful and has a great job teaching cosmetology and works so hard at everything too and is someone I really look up to as a Christian person!

I found out a couple of months ago that she had some of the same learning problems as a child as me. I couldn't believe that she is being used by God every day in everything she does, and does it all in spite of having a learning issue, just like Brandon and just like me! They are both so normal and it helped me see that I can

be normal just like them, if I would stop letting it bother me so much!

Isn't it amazing that God put all these things and people in my life all around me at the same time?

After always feeling not as smart as people and thinking I must not be normal, I now feel good about having my disability, believe it or not! I believe it has made me stronger and that it makes me a hard worker. I've decided that being normal may not be as great as just being "unique", which is what we all are anyway, unique and different in our own way!

>>>2 Timothy 2:3: You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

That's what I am, a Soldier, and a Princess of Jesus. I am a Christian. God will always be at my side.

So why worry about a little disability? Sure some days it's hard. Sure some years are going to be harder than others for me and my disability. But as long as I trust God, I can do anything and have no limits. Just by me writing this article, I am proving that!

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

So many people have helped me feel better about my disability, and helped me overcome it. So thanks everyone for helping me!

Remember-All your tomorrows are in God's hands!

Philippians 1:6
He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.



The Oreo Party

My teenage daughter loves Oreo cookies, so I decided to have a Oreo party....go ahead and laugh.... but it was fun.

So I tell my friends I'm having an Oreo party and invite them and their families over to eat supper and taste all the different flavors of Oreos, plus I have an Oreo dip that is "to die for" .

So anyway, I'm sitting in the kitchen watching everyone mingle. They are all talking, laughing, making jokes and just enjoying each other's company while eat-

ing Oreo's and dip when I realize something.

As I look at the Oreos in my friend's hands, it occurs to me that I could have, just as easily, had a 'keg' party and the Oreos could be cans of beer in their hands.

My house looked like one of those beer commercials, with all the fun and excitement and laughter except we had Oreos instead of beer.

You see, we adults have the same decisions to make that you teenagers have to make. We have to choose our friends wisely and we also have to choose NOT TO DRINK.

Now I do understand that your peer pressure can be very hard, but that's why choosing Godly friends is so important.

If your friends have the same true convictions you have then you can "party" without the puking, passing out and the pain of regret ---so bring on the Oreos, girlfriend !!

Proverbs 17:22

A cheerful heart is good medicine...

By Lynn Cowell



Mean Girls

The words on Facebook glared back at her. "You are so ugly! You are fat, annoying

and I hate you!" Lindsay just sat there staring at the screen. "What did I say? What did I do?"

Maybe this has happened to you before. Or maybe you are fortunate enough to have never faced the type of flat out rejection that Lindsay did. I recently spotted a t-shirt at the mall that read, "You're no one until someone talks about you." Growing up today in a world where *Mean Girls* and *Gossip Girl* are our movie and T.V. titles, it comes as no surprise that many of us have been there. We have all experienced rejection or not being accepted by someone or a group of people at some point.

These feelings of being unaccepted are definitely not new. In Song of Solomon 1:5, we are first introduced to a young girl who feels the same way: "I am dark, but lovely..." (NKJV). She felt rejected. Those feelings are so opposite of what we want to feel. We want to be accepted!

So what can we do when we feel out, when we feel rejected? For me, it helps to find out where I am *in*, where I belong. The Lord is very specific about how He feels about me:

"My beloved is mine, and I am His..." (Song of Solomon 2:16a, NKJV). I

am His beloved!

"...All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you." (Song of Solomon 4:7b, NIV).

"The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord" (Psalm 45:11, NIV).

These are the types of verses I put *everywhere* so that I can read them over and over and over again. When I feel rejected, these words remind me that I am accepted. When mean girl (and life) get you down and cause you to feel like you're not in the "in" crowd, like you don't fit their standards, like you're not good enough, or you don't belong, remember what God says. You are accepted. You are loved exactly as you are. The world may tell you hurtful things about yourself or reject you, but their words do not reflect the reality of God's feelings for you. God's truths, His promises in His Word stand forever, and those are what we must listen to.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, Rejection is really hard to take. Please help me to run to You and fill myself up with Your love and truth. Help me to understand how much You accept and love me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Think About It:

When someone puts me down, how do I respond?

Am I cautious about the words I say or the way I treat others so that I myself am not a "mean girl"?

Live It:

Look around you. Find a person who may be feeling rejected and purposefully reach out to them.

Write out one of the verses in the devo and give it to a friend who needs to hear those words.

Power Verses:

Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." (NIV)

Zechariah 2:8, "For this is what the Lord Almighty says, '...for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye.' " (NIV)

Lynn Cowell is the author of "His Revolutionary Love" a study for young girls. She is also a writer and speaker with Proverbs 31 Ministries. You can connect with Lynn on Facebook at Lynn Martin Cowell and read more of her devotions or watch her videos at www.RadRevolution.org .

Nahum 1:7

**The LORD is good,
a refuge in times of trouble.
He cares for those who trust in him.**



Grace In The Wilderness Ministries

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FOCUS SCRIPTURE VERSE:

Isaiah 43:19

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

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

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

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

This is a free bi-monthly email newsletter. To subscribe for an electronic or paper copy (\$5/year), please just call or email us.

Watch for our
Grace In The
Wilderness Teen
Conference in
October, 2011 at
Blue Ridge View
Baptist Church,
Pickens, SC

Check us out at
www.WildernessGrace.org

Never be afraid to try something new. Remember Amateurs built the Ark. Professionals built the Titanic. -Anonymous

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