

Gracie's Way

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



Go Hard Or Go Home

By Sharon Hawkins

Gracie loves to play softball! It is a special treat for her to get to play it with the kids from her neighborhood. During the summer, they play on Thursday evenings.

The first item of business is always to pick teams. Gracie usually doesn't get picked first, but the good news is that she doesn't get picked last either.

Each time she gets up to bat she gives it her all—watching the ball intently and swinging at just the right time with all her might.

About 30% of the time, she gets a hit. She runs as fast as her lanky legs will carry her. She gives it her all.

Sometimes her all isn't enough though and she walks away feeling dejected after a less than stellar performance. At times she hears the muffled chuckles from some of the kids who never miss the ball. It comes so easy for some of them; but for her, not so much, she has to work at it. But she has the secret weapon, an iron will, an "I can do it" attitude.

She hasn't always just naturally given her all at softball or at life. This is something that she started to learn when she began middle school.

She wanted to go out for softball and her mom was very clear. She told Gracie, "I'm not paying the fees for all the equipment—softball uniform, helmet, glove and more so you can quit as soon as the going gets hard. You're going to have to hang in there with it through the hard parts."

David Viscott once said, "If you could get the courage to begin, you have the courage to succeed." Gracie's love of the game gave her the courage to take the first step.

But there were more than a few times that Gracie wanted to quit that first season. She was even more driven to prove to her mom and dad that she was a big girl, that she could do this.

The long days of practice, the soreness from all the throwing drills, the big bruise on her left arm where the pitching veered to the right and she didn't quite get out of the way quick enough, not to mention the

scrapes and scabs on her knees where she slid into home. Sometimes she wanted to take her bat and ball and go home. Her coach would always say, "Go hard or go home!" Ahhh, but she loved this game so she kept pressing! Her parents are so proud of her!

God expects three things from His children. Do your best, with what you have, where you are, now. When the going gets tough, it's time for the tough to get going.

Philippians 4:13 reminds us, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Gracie's not always first, or best, but she's always there doing all she can.

Colossians 3:23-24 says, Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

There are so many people who will tell you that you can't. What you've gotta do is turn around and say, "Watch me!"

Inside this issue:

Go Hard Or Go Home	1
Letter To My Teenage Self	2
Facing The Giants	2-3
My Testimony	3-4
Camo Dad	4
God Doesn't Call The Equipped	5
Toilet Training	5
A Proverbs 31 Kind of Girl	6
My 10th Birthday	6
About Us	7

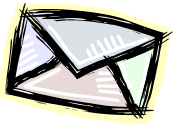
Special points of interest:

- 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...



Galatians 6:9

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.



Letter To My Teenage Self

By Cathy McCormick

Hello Beautiful!

Now, before you throw something at me, just hear me out for a few minutes, okay?

I know, I know -- you are sick of Mom telling you that you are beautiful. I may be one of the adults now, but I'm different from the rest of them. I'm different because I am YOU. Yes, I am the grown-up, adult version of you! I can see you looking in the mirror and SEEING anything but beauty. I hear you saying: My hair's all wrong! My hips are too wide! My braces make me look like a robot! My feet are too big! I wear glasses! I'm fat! I'm ugly!

I know how frustrating it is see your reflection and want to throw something when Mom comes by and says, "Now dear, you are so beautiful. It's what's on the inside that counts." Yeah. Easy for her to say. She's never

been in high school and she's never had to compete with the size 0 girls with perfect hair and no hips!

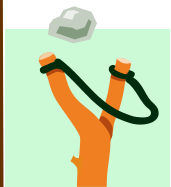
Oh, how I wish I could hold up a magic mirror that shows you the REAL you. A magic mirror that lets you just see how beautiful you really are! Those braces will be gone in another year, and your smile is going to be one of your greatest assets. Honest. Those hips that seem too wide now, well, they are going to become part of your lovely hourglass figure. Believe me!

My sweet teenage self, the most important thing I wish I could show you is that you are mislabeling yourself. I don't want you to spend years thinking that you don't measure up, that you are not pretty just because you don't look like the girls on TV, in the music videos, etc. I spent way too many years being hard on myself and thinking I was ugly. I promise you,

precious one, that the "looks" that feel so important right now are going to be so unimportant as you grow into the spectacular woman you ARE BECOMING!

Stand tall and proud in front of that mirror! Don't use the filter of popular culture to see. Remove those filters and truly SEE YOU -- the PERFECT YOU that God created. Look past what you see as "flaws" and see into your heart -- yup, that sweet, caring, loving heart of yours. What you're looking at is the pure beauty that you are!

I know that you think Mom just says you're beautiful 'cause she's your Mom and she HAS to say that. On the other hand, I am you and I know where you are and where you are going and you are FABULOUS! Honest.



Facing the Giants... Teen Suicide

By Brenda Horne

How do you feel about suicide? How do you think God feels about suicide?

Honestly I have thought about it before. I don't think it is a good thing at all. I got some help finally but I know God doesn't want us to. If God didn't need us He would take us out of this world. - MacKenzie 14

Suicide makes me feel very bad because people were brought into this world for a reason and I just feel bad for the person who did commit suicide and the situation they must have been in. I think God feels that people are precious and I don't think He is mad at them. He's just mad at the things they did. - Tatum 13

I feel that suicide is letting the devil win. God has a purpose for each of us and when we commit suicide, we cannot fill God's plan. - Brett 19

I feel like teens that have tried suicide don't look forward to the future. I feel like God feels sad, because He puts you here for a reason. - 13

I feel that suicide is very selfish, it can leave people wondering if they could have done more. I think God doesn't like it but if you're saved, you're forgiven. - Sarah Grace 13

I don't like it. I don't think God likes it either because you're killing yourself. God says your body is a temple and He doesn't want you to destroy His temple. - Jordan 7th grade

I don't think you should ever resort to suicide. I personally don't think that life could get so bad that you should take your own life. I think God hates suicide. He should decide when your life is over. I think that is how He intended it to be. But I believe that as long as you are saved you will still get into heaven no matter how you die. - Ashton 16

I feel that it's not a good thing to do. I think God feels that way too. - 13

I really don't think it's right, God gave you life so live it. - 13

Sometimes the anguish and depression we go through makes it seem like suicide is the only answer. We may get to the point where we feel the only way out of the pain is ...

Teen Suicide (Cont'd)

By Brenda Horne

death. And that, my sweet teenage friend, is a lie straight from Satan! Satan feeds us lies that seem so real that death, even Hell, is better than life. But it is NOT TRUE. Try to recognize that suicidal thoughts are NOT of God!

YOUR GOD, the God of the universe, the God who created you wants you to LIVE!! And not just LIVE but LIVE FOR HIM!! Fight through the heartache and LIVE ... now that is something to behold! And guess what, God does not expect us to fight alone, oh no, He WILL fight for us!! *Deuteronomy 20:4 says The Lord YOUR GOD is the One who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies and to give you victory!!* HOW AWESOME IS THAT!! That is straight from God

Almighty Himself ... THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS! *You do not fight alone!* God WILL HELP YOU! The pain you face in the night is so very hard, but with God ...joy will come in the morning!

DO NOT give into Satan's lies and suicide... *HOLD ON to truth of God's word and God's love!!*

Listed below are help lines. Please call, please LIVE ... you can face tomorrow because you ARE LOVED!!

National Suicide Prevention Hotline:
1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

On-line help: SuicideHotlines.com

... Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. [Psalms 30:5](#)

The Lord YOUR GOD is the One who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies and to give you victory!! [Deuteronomy 20:4](#)

It is the Lord YOUR GOD who goes with you: He will not leave you or forsake you. [Deuteronomy 31:6](#)

I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. [Psalms 118:17](#)

My Testimony

By Lydia Grace Nalley

November 15, 1998, I was born Lydia Grace Rogers. I was a very happy baby.

Then my sister was born, soon after my brother came along. I really don't remember much about that part of my life. I don't know the date or the reason that my birth father left my mom, but I was around four years old.

I do remember going to a McDonald's for him to spend time with me, Aryn and Ryan. We waited for four hours and he never showed up. I haven't seen him since.

My mom struggled to make ends meet, being a single mom with three kids, no husband, no child support, no help. I'm sure it was a heavy load for her, but she always showed us how much she loved us and took care of us to the best of her ability.

When I was about seven, my mom found out she had ovarian cancer. I

will never forget the day she sat the three of us down to tell us. I really didn't understand all she was saying, but I knew it wasn't good.

I can remember crying for hours. She went through chemotherapy treatments, was very sick and lost all of her hair.

I can't imagine what all she was thinking, a single mom with three small kids and no support. I just kept thinking, "Is my mom going to die?"

Since I was the oldest, I was in charge and Aryn and Ryan had to do what I said and I had to make sure everything was done. I would get them dressed every morning for school, feed them breakfast, and we would be off to school.

In a way, Aryn and Ryan looked up to me as a mother figure. I spent my days at school worrying about my mom at home sick with no one there

to help her. When I left school to go home I worried was she still going to be alive when I get there? I was scared to even go in the house.

When I got home I had to do my homework and fix us all something to eat. We ate a lot of pop tarts and cream of wheat, but I was doing the best a nine year old could do.

I would do the dishes and the laundry. I was trying to get the clothes out of the washer to put them in the dryer and I fell in the washer head first and couldn't get out. Somehow I finally worked myself out of it.

My mom kept getting worse. She would have to go to the hospital for long periods of time and we would just stay with whoever would keep us.

My Testimony (Cont'd)

By Lydia Grace Nalley

from our church until Mama would get well enough to come back home.

She had gotten bad enough at end of 2007 that the Hospice had started coming out. By this time my school guidance counselor had found out about our situation and different people had started helping my mom out. They brought us food and clothes. Half Mile Lake brought us a Christmas tree, decorated it and we had the most presents we had ever had in our entire lives.

Mom was still getting worse. I was scared to leave her home alone. Then I was afraid she would die during the night and I wouldn't know it.

I would sneak down the hallway after everyone had went to sleep and lay down in the floor at the foot of her bed and listen to her breathe so I knew she was still alive.

Mama had gotten really bad so our grandfather, whom we had never met, came down from Maryland to take care of her. This took a huge burden off of me.

At that time we started spending the

night with one of our guidance counselors, Mrs. Nelson. As it got closer to the end for my mom, we spent more time at Mrs. Nelson's.

On May 10, 2008, the other guidance counselor, Mrs. Cunningham, came from my school over to Mrs. Nelson's early in the morning and it was Mother's Day. Mrs. Cunningham took me, my sister and brother to the living room, sat us down and began to tell us that our mom had went to be with Jesus last night.

My mother died on May 10, 2008. I had no idea what would happen to us. We lived with Mrs. Nelson because she was our guardian and in charge of helping us find a family.

There was a family out of Greenville that had come forward and said they would take us. The adoption agency started the process. We spent a few nights with them to try and get to know them. We were at their house on July 4th when the dad had brought fireworks out. He let me light one and it then fell over, almost going off on Aryn. He kicked it into his neighbor's bush, setting it into a burning bush.

We nicknamed him Moses (like Moses and the burning bush).

When we went back for our counseling, they asked us if we felt safe with this family. We said no. They told us later that we would not be going to live with this family but there was another family that would take us. That's when we met the Nalley family. It started off with meeting Mrs. Wanda and Mr. Gerald, as we called them at first.

Then later we met Jennifer and Julie. We spent a weekend with them, then a whole week, then we moved in permanently. On December 18th, 2008, I became Lydia Grace Nalley.

Deuteronomy 31:8

And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.



Camo Dad

someone call out to me. I looked up in that direction but I didn't see anyone.

I know that voice. It's my daddy. I looked and looked but I still couldn't see him.

He had been hunting and he had on his camo. Finally I saw him and joy filled my heart. I'm a daddy's girl and I always will be.

One morning I was outside feeding my pets and I heard Him.

It also got me to thinking about how our Heavenly Father calls out to us and we hear His voice but don't see Him.

It's not because He is wearing camo or hiding from us but rather that we are just too caught up in our own selfish desires to see Him.

He's there in the smile of a stranger on a day that just isn't going so well. He's there in a little child's laughter or the beauty of His nature. He's there in His Holy Word or in our very best friend.

God is everywhere we just have to take our minds off of ourselves and look.

Acts 17:27

So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;



God Doesn't Call The Equipped, He Equips Those That He Calls

By Kara Murrell

As we travelled to New Orleans, Louisiana, the missions team from Lander University Baptist Collegiate Ministries had hard work in mind. But what we faced was much different than we had expected.

The man we were working for had told our Campus Minister, Scott, that our team would be doing some light construction, which was good considering our team of 20 was made up of 16 girls and 4 boys.

When we arrived at our work site we were all overwhelmed. The house we were working on, which we thought would need to be painted and cleaned, had no walls and large holes in the floor.

As our site coordinator began explaining all of the jobs he wanted completed during the time we were there, I could feel the worry of everyone around me. We all felt completely inadequate.

The tasks he called "less skilled"

were very intimidating to me. We were all afraid we were going to mess up or let him down because we were not confident in our construction skills, but he carefully instructed us on how to complete each task and we began to work.

Because we were all so nervous, we found it necessary to keep encouraging one another. As I found myself driving nails with a few partners, I became frustrated very quickly because I kept bending the nails.

Most of the nails I had done looked terrible, primarily because when it became difficult I just kept going and I never slowed down. Finally, one of my partners, Sydney, told me to slow down and be patient.

I listened and began to take my time, thanking God for that opportunity between driving each nail. It felt so much better.

The rest of the nails I drove certainly weren't perfect, but they did look better and God gave me an extra

measure of patience that day. Throughout the rest of the time at that house, we accomplished more than we ever thought possible. Many people performed tasks that they had never done before, including me.

The house looked totally different by the time we were ready to leave and so did we. There was a totally new spirit about our team. We no longer looked defeated, but we looked like conquerors.

As a team, we learned that during those times that we feel inadequate we must realize that God can do so much more with our feeble bodies than we could ever imagine, if we trust Him. It is so important to say yes before God shows us where to go, knowing that with Him there is nothing we cannot do.

Romans 8:37
Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

By Brenda Horne



Toilet Training

Does anyone else besides me pray in the bathroom stall? Yes, I know it sounds strange, but just stop for second and think about it. Where else can you be completely alone, closed off from the rest of the world for brief moments at a time?

To me, it's the perfect place to pray. I'm so busy at work and my mind runs 90 miles an hour all day long. Then I come home to a house full of more work. It seems I don't have time to do anything.

And I'll bet it's the same way at

school. You go from class to class, learning, studying, talking and before you know it, the day is over and you have not thought of God at all. Not one time has He crossed your mind ... the entire day.

So now, when you get those brief moments of alone time, pray to your Savior. It doesn't have to be a long prayer and you don't have to close your eyes if you don't want to. You can pray for the test you are about to take, pray for your friend who just broke up with her boyfriend or for the strange girl that no one likes. Or simply just say "Hey", to your Savior. Try

to "train" yourself to think about God and remember He wants to talk to you. He loves you and is willing to listen to you any time and any place.

1 Thessalonians 5:17
Pray without ceasing.

Luke 18:1
Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

A Proverbs 31 Kind of Girl

By Sharon Hawkins

A lot is written about Proverbs 31 as a guide for being a Godly woman, but how can that translate for a teen?

Who can find a girl of noble character? She is worth more than popularity or anything you can buy. Her family and friends trust her and she brings good to their lives because of her loyalty and faithfulness.

She is not lazy but does chores without being asked. She loves doing

things for those less fortunate and she reaches out her hands to the needy.

She helps her family be prepared for potential storms but does not worry about them. She can be confident about her future because her faith is in God.

She dresses so that others can see the respect she has for her body, her family and for God.

She thinks before she speaks and always tries to lift up and encourage her family and friends. They think she is blessed because she is and they often tell her so.

Many girls do great things, but she goes above and beyond what is expected of her. Popularity and beauty are temporary. But a girl who loves the Lord, now that's really something!!



My 10th Birthday

By Tiffany Chandler

July 6th, 1996, I'll never forget that date. It was my birthday and I was having a sleepover that night. I had seven little girls that were going to spend the night with me. We had a tent pitched in the back yard and even had a TV and VCR in there so that we could camp and watch movies. I was sooo excited! I knew this was going to be the best birthday party ever. Boy, was I wrong!

We did cake and ice cream with the family first. Then, I opened my presents and we played some games. Everything was going great. I'll never forget my mom coming down the steps with my cake singing "Happy Birthday" and then she tripped and fell and all of us kids ate my cake off of the stepping stones.

She wasn't hurt, so we all got a good laugh out of that. She had a boyfriend at the time that I wasn't too fond of. He was loud, had tattoos all over his body and he was very mean. He was never really mean to me, but he was mean to my mom and I saw it. This particular night he played cool, at least until everyone left. My family began to leave about 8 that night and the girls and I were getting settled in our tents.

As we began to get quiet we heard screaming coming from the inside of my house and my friends didn't know what it was, but I did. I knew that my mom and her boyfriend were arguing about something and there was no way this was going to turn out good. The fight escalated and my mom came outside to get us girls because she had made him leave and, well, we couldn't be left outside alone with some mean, angry man running around. Most of my friends became frightened and wanted to go home. I was humiliated. I knew that these girls would never come back to spend the night with me. I know that I wouldn't come back, if it was me. I wished I never had to be at this house again either. Only God knows how many times I prayed for that.

All of my friends wound up leaving except one. I was so thankful that she was there with me, but at the same time I was so sorry she had to go through what I went through on a daily basis. The argument was nowhere near over. He began to beat on the windows and scream mean things outside of my house. We were terrified. She and I went into my bedroom to try and occupy our minds, that's when I told her about my secret journal that was for God's eyes only. I was still learning about my savior so I wasn't really sure how to teach her too. I

just told her, "Whenever you're scared and feel alone, write God a letter. He doesn't write back but I do believe he reads it." He usually got a few letters a day from me. I had a lot to say and He was my best friend so who better to talk to than Him, right?

My conversations with God still don't sound very professional even to this day at the ripe old age of 26, but it's coming from my heart and that's all that matters.

That night, sitting in my bedroom floor, both of us little girls scared to death, began to write our letters to God and in a matter of no time my house became quiet, very peaceful. My mother sat in the living room watching television alone. He had left and didn't return that night. I believe that night I witnessed to my friend the best way a 10-year-old child could.

I also believe that no matter what method you use to talk to Him, He hears it and He knows your struggles. If you're unsure of how to talk to God when you're riding down the road alone, pick up your cell phone and give Him a pretend call. He might not pick up and say "Hello" but I know He's hearing every bit of it and I guarantee He'll make it all alright.



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
Coming
November of 2013*

Like us on Facebook:
Grace In The Wilderness

Check us out at
www.WildernessGrace.org

Do you want to be wise? Choose wise friends. —Charles Swindoll

Grace In The Wilderness Ministries
139 Commons Way
Greenville, SC 29611