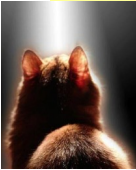


Gracie's Way

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



Shining On The Inside

By Sharon Hawkins

Gracie stepped out onto the stage, realizing she now had two hearts. One was in her throat and another one was in her chest beating like the Burundi drum of an African warrior.

Smile, Gracie. Remember to smile. Don't stutter. Don't keep saying "uh" or "okay". Engage the audience.

Yeah, right! ... Who was she kidding? ... "Lord, PLEASE help me just get through this!!!"

For months, she had both dreaded and looked forward to tonight. She knew it was such a privilege to be asked by her Principal to emcee the talent show at her high school. She had no idea why he had asked her. She was totally unqualified, but for whatever reason, he thought that she was.

She had flashed him her best smile and immediately responded that she would be thrilled and honored to do it. On the inside, she was screaming, "What are you doing, Gracie? You know you can't do this!"

But here she was, doing it. And how could that have

been 3 months ago, now it seemed like last week.

As she had walked by her classmates back stage, she encouraged them, telling them they were going to do great. Hey, couldn't someone tell her she was going to do great?! After all, we all need someone to tell us everything is going to be all right, don't we?

And everything was all right. She got a few names wrong, introduced one act out of order and said "uh" more times than she meant to. But, the Lord was faithful. He ALWAYS is, and He got her through it.

He is the Light that shines through her and He means for her to shine for Him in everything she does. It should all be for the glory of God and He wants her to shine, shine, shine for Him! We don't need the spotlight if God's light is shining on the inside.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?

Your playing small doesn't serve the world. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. (from the 2006 movie, *Akeley and the Bee*)

Matthew 5:14-16 says, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining—they just shine. —Dwight L. Moody

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!!

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Special points of interest:

- Our Grace In The Wilderness Teen Conference EMPOWERED JESUS GIRL coming November 22, 2013.
- We're on Facebook. Like our Grace In The Wilderness Page. Look us up...



John 8:12

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

I Am All That!*

By Brenda Horne

Oh shoot! There is only one desk left and it's next to *her*. I have tried to avoid Stacy since kindergarten but here I am again, having to sit next to her.

As I make my way down the aisle, she watches me the entire time with a huge smile on her face. I pretend I don't see her. Why is she smiling at me anyway? Doesn't she realize how jacked-up her teeth are and she should just keep her mouth closed at all times. Why doesn't she get braces like the rest of us! I really don't understand why she insists on smiling at me anyway. I have never made any attempt to notice her; other than the occasional smile, but still, that doesn't mean I want to be her friend. I'm not trying to be mean, but I really am too good for her. She needs to go find her own kind.

By the time I reach my desk, she finally gets the point that I am going to ignore her and her hideous grin. As I sit down I look at her hair, as usual it is thick with grease and very stringy. Her clothes are not dirty but they are not clean either, they are dingy. I wonder if she even owns a washing machine. But what's really weird is her clothes are always so wrinkled, does she sleep in them at night and wear them to school the next day. What kind of weirdo does that? She is such a "train wreck".

Also she smells terrible. Why doesn't she bath? Everyone knows you have to bath. Oops, she caught me staring, so I immediately look away. I think she may have smiled at me again, but I wasn't going to keep looking to find out. I don't understand her insistence on smiling at me, I mean, I know I'm supposed to be nice to everyone, the Lord says so, but she just really grosses me out.

I don't know, she is just kind of disgusting and besides, I'm not as mean to her as other people are. At least I do smile at her sometimes, when no one sees me. And I'm sure she is used to being shunned by now, she has been picked on from the first day I saw her in kindergarten. And honestly, if she doesn't like it, she should do something with herself.

Class is about to begin when a boy walks by her desk and accidentally touches her hair. He looks down and loudly says " EEWww you are so nasty!" and wipes his hand on his jeans.

Everyone laughs and she quickly looks at me, her face blood red from embarrassment; she tries to laugh too but tears come instead. Her head drops to hide her shame.

I sat there for a minute just staring at her, not laughing, just staring. She peered through her dirty hair and our eyes locked. She kept looking at me as she wiped away the tears. Finally her eyes fell away in complete humiliation. And it was at that moment, for the first time, I didn't see filth ... I saw a person.

Could it be that she has no choice but to wear those clothes? And maybe she *doesn't* own a washing machine or have any way to wash her hair.

Could it be possible that no one has ever cared enough about her to teach her any of these things? Suddenly my heart ached for her. What if she is doing the very best she can and still gets laughed at, no matter how hard she tries?

Then it dawned on me that I have never seen anyone be nice to her, ever. And maybe that's why she smiles so big at me all the time, because I'm the only one who smiles back at her. My pathetic, half hearted

smile may be the only kindness she gets in school.

Suddenly I am ashamed. How could I have been so cruel all these years? She is a person, just like me, with feelings and a longing to fit in. The Bible teaches to be kind to others but I didn't want to. I liked feeling "better than" her. I liked being able to "look down my nose" at her.

As my heart softened, I looked in my book bag to find her a tissue and handed it to her. She raised her head and gave a slight smile, and then class began.

Now, I no longer avoid Stacy. We talk in class and it turns out she is a very nice person. I realized that she may not be able to control what happens in her life.

And I honestly thank the Lord for showing me that I AM NOT "all that"!!

Romans 12:3

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Romans 12:16

Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.



Bucket List

By Sharon Hawkins

If you were making a bucket list, a list of things you want to do during your life, what would be on it?

- Getting a driver's license?
- Getting a high school diploma?
- Finishing college?
- Getting married?
- Having a child?
- Visiting the Grand Canyon?
- Going skydiving?
- Going on a mission trip?
- Helping someone in need?
- Serving in your church?

Let's think farther out, like all the way to eternity—the day your life is over and you meet the Lord face to face in Heaven. Will a driver's license or the Grand Canyon seem as important? What about ...

- Memorizing scripture?
- Leading someone to faith in Christ?

What are some things that you would want to have checked off on your bucket list that you present to God?

"I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds." Jeremiah 17:10



Facing the Giants...

By Brenda Horne

How do the following statements make you feel and why?

Which one bothers you the most?

* NO ONE LIKES YOU.

* THERE IS NO GOD.

I wouldn't listen to the statements and I would try to witness but keep praising God through it all. Amanda, 16

I don't think the statements are true. Because I have friends and if no one likes me at least God loves me. The one that bothers me the most would be "No one likes you" because I would want everyone to like me. Jordan 13.

It makes me mad.

If someone were to tell me they didn't like me, it would hurt my feelings and make me wonder what I had done. But I would know I had a friend in Jesus. It would break my heart to hear someone say, "There is no God" because I know they'll spend eternity without Him. The statement "There is no God" definitely bothers me the worst. Anna, 19

The following statement: "No one likes you" doesn't really bother me because I honestly don't care what people think of me. But saying "There is no God" makes me angry because it goes against my beliefs and it just frustrates me. Louise, 13.

They make me mad and sad that someone would believe the statements. But "There is no God" bothers me the most. Abigail, 11

I wouldn't like it if anyone said either of those to me. I would be mad. "There is no God" bothers the most though. I don't care if no one likes me. God made me the way I am ... so yeah! Monica, 14

"No one likes you."- It kind a makes me mad. But I don't care if you like me or not! "There is no God"- there IS a God because He made you and everything we have. It makes me upset when people say there is no God. 13 yrs old

"No one likes you". I believe that God's love for me is the most important and my parents love me. I'm really bothered by the statement "There is no God". I know God is real. It makes me sad for people who

believe there is no God. Sarah Grace, 14

The point of these questions was to conjure up feelings about yourself and God. "No one likes you" is painful to hear and definitely causes hurt feelings. But as the girls show in their answers above, Jesus Christ is your friend even if no one else will be. As a matter of fact, Jesus is such a good friend he is like a brother to you. (Proverbs 18:24 One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother).

The statement "There is no God" is very disturbing. If there is no God, then there is no future and there is no hope. Not having friends is a situation that can be fixed but having no God, then we have no purpose. But the truth is God DOES exist and we DO have a hope and a future! There is a purpose for our lives and God wants to show that purpose to us, as our Savior and our friend!!

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: Psalms 146:5

The Eyes of Jesus

By Taylor Hawkins

For a moment, imagine Jesus is standing right in front of you. He has a big smile on his face, and His eyes are staring straight into yours. The joy and acceptance that you feel in your heart at this moment is unfathomable. His perfect love for you is radiating from His glorious face. From your head to your toes, all you can feel is pure elation.

As this feeling of pure bliss consumes your entire being, you realize that those eyes that look at you with such tenderness are the same eyes that saw the universe take form at the beginning of time. You find yourself dumbfounded at the fact that everything that has ever existed, does exist, and will exist came solely from the man standing opposite of you. His knowledge and wisdom are immeasurable.

This man is aware of every event that has ever happened for the entire history and future of the cosmos. He knows every atom in existence and its exact location at any moment from the beginning to the end. You realize that you could never fully imagine the depths of this perfect man's understanding.

The radiance of holy kindness and goodness that flows from every inch of this man overwhelms you. In your life, you have committed so many sins that you could never begin to count them all. Even though it's a difficult thing to say, you know in your heart that you deserve an eternity in Hell. You recognize that there is a difference between you and this Holy King. He is perfect. His soul is not tainted with the sin that yours is. There is absolutely nothing wrong in Him. You realize that this man, Jesus, is goodness in its purest form.

But this doesn't make sense, does it? Why would this perfect and holy God

see such a filthy and unworthy sinner and smile so tenderly and lovingly? The answer is love.

He was born in a barn and laid in a manger. He walked on this earth that He created to be perfect but was ruined by mankind's sin and rebellion. He faced everything that we do and more. He ministered to the lowest of the lows and healed the blind, deaf, and lame. He raised people from the dead. He spread the Good News of His kingdom to people all around the land. After all the good He had done, He was betrayed by one of His closest friends for a few pieces of silver. He was captured and imprisoned despite having done no wrong. He was beaten senselessly, beyond what you could ever imagine. Whips dug into his skin and ripped his flesh from the bone. His holy hands and feet were nailed to a nasty, splintered cross. This humble and perfect man was hung on this cross naked for the entire world to see and was mocked unimaginably when He had committed no crime.

Why would He go through all that? Couldn't He have called down His army of angels to free Him from such injustice? Yes, he certainly could have. Why didn't He then? Once again, the answer is love.

As He hung there in shame and agony, He didn't look at everyone with anger like they all deserved. His holy eyes saw His children. He saw His helpless children who were going to experience an eternity away from Him and all that is good if He didn't save them. This holy God of perfection had so much love for the people that wronged Him that He died and experienced separation from God so they wouldn't have to. When He closed His eyes as He hung on that horrible cross, He saw you and me. He saw us in heaven with Him. He knew that if He suffered, we wouldn't have to.

With his final breath, the God of the universe uttered, "It is finished." The powers of Hell celebrated in victory as those holy eyes of Jesus closed in death. He was dead. The enemy had won. All hope seemed lost.

But God wasn't finished yet. Jesus had been dead for three days. Then, all of a sudden, those gentle eyes were opened with a power beyond our wildest dreams. Jesus was alive! He conquered death once and for all! He trampled Satan and all evil for us! Jesus was right: It is finished! Because of Him and what He did for us, all the filthy sin that weighs you and me down, has no power over us anymore. We are free! There is a reason why He is smiling at you. He sees you as a holy child of God. Because you believe in Him and His sacrifice, He sees you as righteous and perfect like Him. When you depend on Him, the eyes of Jesus see nothing but a glorious and blameless child of the King! Why? The answer is love.

Hebrews 4:14-16

"So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."

2 Corinthians 5:21

"For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ."

Guilt is an emotion we feel when we live under the law. Freedom is what we feel when we live under grace.

When we remain in guilt we draw away from God and that allows us to become more vulnerable to sin. When we let the law destroy our relationship with Christ we feel like we can't ever live up to his standards.

Good news! The only "standard" He has is to run to Him as you are. He wants you.

Sinner or saint, proud or humble, liar or truthful. When you accept Christ, you sign up for daily carrying your cross. Not for being perfect, but to live for Him the best you can.

Isn't it the coolest thought that just knowing who God is makes you righteous?!

Not how much money you give to church, or not even how many times you go to church... His grace is enough!

Some of you may read this and think of a time you were closer to God. Well guess what! Though your time with Him has changed, his grace hasn't.

God WILL NOT relent until He has all of you. Just give all of you to Him today. Live in freedom. Live for Him.

You will slip up, but God forgives you even before you committed that sin!

With Christ on your side, you will always be pure and holy because good works will not save you. Jesus saves.

Romans 11:6

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.



By Marie Pritchett

How many times have you heard "Because I said so"? I would dare say, more times than you can count. When kids are little a lot of their questions begin with "Why,.....". After the one thousandth time of asking, "Why do I have to eat vegetables?" "Why can't I stick this pin in here (the electrical outlet)?" "Why can't we go to Disney World every weekend?" "Why do I have to wear a coat (in the snow)?" or "Why can't we bring the cows into our house?," most parents give up with trying to calmly

explain and, out of frustration, simply say, "Because I said so!"

As the small child grows up and starts to ask some more difficult questions, and may I say with more persistence, "Why can't I hang out with that group of kids?" "Why can't I date before I am 16?" "Why can't I see that movie?" "Why can't you drop me and my friend off at the mall?" or "Why can't I listen to that music?," we as parents can grow frustrated and simply say, "Because I said so!"

As a teen or pre-teen, we always think we know what is best for us and that we can take care of ourselves. And, yes, sometimes that is true. But as parents, it is our job to keep our kids safe and to help them make decisions that are in their best interest.

I remember being a teenager and thinking I knew what was best for me and that I could take care of myself. I thought I could always say "no" when necessary and "yes" to the right

things. Once when I was in the eighth grade my friend was having a party. I was so excited because not only were our friends going to be there but I knew there were going to be older kids there too.

Although I had this nagging feeling that I shouldn't go, I wanted to be a part of the "in" crowd and told myself that this was going to be a lot of fun. At first the party started out fine, a lot of music, talking and laughing. Then things quickly changed. The kids in high school had brought alcohol. Although I wasn't drinking, I was scared and knew that I shouldn't be there.

I wanted nothing more than to go home but I knew if I called and told my parents what was going on, they would never let me go to another party. BAD decision!!! Within an hour the parents came home and, as you can imagine, things did not end well.

Because I Said So

By Marie Pritchett

That is a horrible feeling! I should have listened to my heart and to my parent’s teachings. The Bible is our life’s instruction manual. God’s Word teaches us that we are to listen to our parents and do as they say because they know what’s best for us. Just like God always knows what’s best for us, your parents have the

responsibility of teaching you right from wrong and keeping you safe. When you have that tugging at your heart, listen to it! It may just save you from making a huge mistake. So the next time your parents say “Because I said so”, remember they only want the very best for you.

Proverbs 1:7, 8, 10
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. Listen my son to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. My sons, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them.

By Sharon Hawkins



Phone 101

shutterstock

“Hello.”
“Hey.”
“Hey, honey, how was your day at school?”
“Good.” Silence
“Did anything exciting happen today?”
“No, ma’am.” Silence
“How was the bus ride home?”
“Good.” Silence
“Got any homework?”
“Yes, ma’am.” Silence
“In what subjects?”
“Science.” Silence
“Okay, grab you a snack and I will see you in a little while when I get home. Love you.”
“Love you too. Bye.”

“Fine.” Silence ... Silence ...
“Well, bye.”
A couple of nights later I asked him to sit down at the kitchen table with me. “I hope you won’t take this the wrong way but I’m thinking that you might like a little coaching with your phone conversations. Do you want some pointers? A lesson in Phone 101?”
He grinned and nodded yes.
“Okay, when you talk with people on the phone, they can’t see your face. All you have is your voice.
When you call someone, they are expecting you are calling them to tell them something. When someone asks you a question on the phone, they want you to talk about it.
A phone conversation is kind of like playing tennis. When somebody hits the conversation ball to you, you have to hit the conversation ball back to them. It’s back and forth. And when you call someone, you are supposed to be the one to start and to end the conversation. Why not make a list of questions that you can ask to keep a conversation going? ”

What boy wouldn’t love pretending that his mom is a girl that he is talking to?! Yeah, right! Lucky for me, Taylor is very laid back and he humored me.
By the end of the lesson, we were rolling with laughter. I was a pretty good 12-year-old girl if I do say so myself.

Fast forward 7 years, Taylor has come a long way, baby! He has had some job interviews in recent weeks and he said he thought of our Phone 101 lesson. It must have worked, he started the new job last week.

While conversation rules can be helpful in communicating with people, isn’t it wonderful that we don’t have to have fancy rules or big words when we talk to God?! We can just be real and speak from our hearts to an awesome God who already knows everything we’re thinking anyway.

Matthew 6:7-8
And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

The next evening 12-year-old Taylor headed upstairs to call a girl. He had been nervous about it all evening. I admit it, I was eavesdropping.

“Hey.”
Silence ... Silence ...

Then the next part was his favorite part of the Phone 101 lesson, I know. We practiced some phone calls. In case you’re wondering, I was the girl.



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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
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November 22, 2013
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"Truth is so rare that it is delightful to tell it." - Emily Dickinson

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