



# Gracie's Way

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

## S & S

Would her mom ever let up? What Gracie was really thinking was ... would her Mom ever let go?

Her mom had always been overprotective. Other moms didn't check up on their daughters like her mom. Other moms didn't have these rules.

Since Gracie had started driving, her mom had become relentless at worrying and relentless at texting.

"Are you there yet? Have you left yet? What time will you be home?" And her mom's personal favorite, "S & S?" In mom text talk, this means "Are you safe and sound?"

How could she answer when she was driving? Didn't her mom know it's not safe to text and drive? Wait a minute! Of course, she knew! That was the first thing on her mom's "list". Her mom meant for her to text back ONLY when she got to where she was going, "Safe and Sound".

### "Don't" List for Driving:

Don't use the cell phone while driving. No texting, talking, checking Twitter or anything else.

Don't drive while upset or emotional.

Don't drive while under the influence of alcohol or anything else, including cough medicine, that can alter judgment.

Don't ride with anyone who is under the influence.

Don't drive friends who act silly or are distracting.

Don't do thrill-seeking stunts.

Don't speed. Don't be running late.

Then there was the **"Do" List:**

Wear your seatbelt.

Adjust for weather conditions.

Allow plenty of space between your car and the car ahead of you.

Oh, yeah, and call your mom when you get there.

At lunch one day, Gracie was talking with her friends about all the rules and how her mom worried too much.

Tiffany said, "Yeah, I know what you mean. My mom won't let me drive anywhere but to school and back."

By Sharon Hawkins

Lindsey said, "Y'all are lucky to have moms who care so much. My mom doesn't care if I even come home."

Then Ryan spoke up and said, "Being safe is a good thing. It wasn't his fault, but y'all know I lost my cousin Joey in a car accident last year and I miss him so, so much. His mom still can't say his name without crying." Ryan burst into tears herself.

The group couldn't jump up quickly enough to hug and cry with their friend. They "group hugged" for the longest time. They knew how heartbroken Ryan had been because of Joey's death.

Gracie wondered how she could have been so insensitive. She thought about what Lindsey and Ryan had said as she walked to the car.

Before she started the car, she picked up the phone.

"Mom, I'm about to leave school. I'm stopping to get gas. But as soon as I'm home, I'll text you to let you know I'm S & S. Oh, and Mom," she whispered through her tears, "I love you ..."

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**1 Corinthians 13:13**  
*So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*



## A Tiger's Tale

By Abby Holcombe

My name is Abigail Holcombe, a 21-year-old Clemson student with one year left until graduation. What do I want to do with this degree I earn, you may ask. I have no idea! A lot of older adults in my life tell me "these are the best years of your life." Those adults have clearly never experienced finals week for Biochemistry and Microbiology, running on way more coffee than sleep. I am so undeserving of the story I am about to tell you, but my Savior seems to think I am eligible for the job.

After my first semester at Clemson my GPA plummeted from a 3.7 to 1.4 in ONE semester. No, I was not partying; no I was not skipping class. I was trying so hard but failing so significantly at every class. However, I had succeeded in making no friends and no connections with my professors. In a school so large, I felt extremely alone.

I received a letter saying that my grades were so dismal I would be placed on Academic Probation, and would not receive ANY scholarships or financial aid for the following school year. I was crushed by this news, so ashamed and embarrassed, because my parents couldn't afford my college with no aid. I found out about a class called CU 101 that offered study strategies for students who were struggling. My professor for the class just happened to be the director of the Academic Success Center at Clemson. The whole focus of this building is helping students like me gain the tools they need to be successful in college and so forth.

After taking the class, I pulled my GPA up so high I was awarded all of my financial aid back and something else: the director offered me a job to be a Student Mentor and Academic Coach to the students just like me, by telling them my story. Although my story doesn't involve what some would see as a major tragedy in my life, "It's just bad grades" you may say, this event was devastating for me.

See, this experience has taught me as humans in our minute, narrow minds we can only see what is happening around us. So, no matter what stage of life you are in, a tragedy can occur, based on your perspective of your circumstances. We serve a God who sees the big picture.

He can see PAST whatever brick wall is right in front of our face. We can't see around it. We can't see over it. We just know it is there and ruining our "perfect" lives.

God used this college student with no friends and just a face in the thousands at this large school and gave me a paying job where I am now one of 5 people out of the thousands! It gets better. I am able to give presentations and meet one-on-one with students and encourage and speak life into these struggling individuals. There is NO OTHER JOB ON CAMPUS where I could do this. There is simply no organization, famous athletic team or University membership I could join where I could meet with students privately and tell them about my faith and my transformation God developed in me.

My point is, God is still working to

reach those people who are weak and discouraged, and He still loves those who fail. That's what God's love is all about - you don't have to be the best; you just have to TRUST in Him to break down your obstacles! This experience is the first experience I have ever had that has shown me my life is really all about reaching others for His purpose. It is no mistake I failed so miserably, because I now know what it feels like for those going through it, I can sympathize and encourage from experience. Similarly, Jesus chose to walk this Earth and be human WITH us so He can relate, and He knows what it feels like when we are lost, hopeless, and defeated.

I encourage you to stop focusing on your brick wall; don't even try to see past it. Look up and tell HIM to use your current circumstance for HIS good and HIS purpose, after all that is YOUR purpose: serving HIM and those who are lost.

I leave you with a question, "What horrible circumstances in your life are you now using your victory to reach others and encourage those who are in the shoes you once were in?"

### Joshua 1:9

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*

## Whose Voice Do You Hear?

By Cathy McCormick

Have you noticed how noisy our world is? Mechanical noise alone can almost make us deaf at times—cars, horns, big trucks, jets, construction equipment, etc.

What's really caught my attention lately, however, is how noisy (and loud) the world of communications is. Now, true, this is nothing new. For years advertisers have tried to get our attention and our money. Advertisers try to convince us that their product will: make you happy; make you attractive; make you popular; make you thin; make you smart; make you hip!

What I've noticed, that really worries me, is that the messages young girls are receiving today go way beyond beautiful hair, good breath and bright teeth, or wearing the right brand of clothes. As I watch TV advertisements, I can't help but notice that advertisers are using sex appeal to sell everything from toothpaste to jeans. Now, I don't want to sound like an old fuddy duddy (and I'm not), but come on!

It's hard being a young girl in a world where you are constantly besieged by messages and images that encourage you to join the popular culture in or-

der to be accepted, to be popular, to be hip. Being a teen is hard enough ... but in today's culture it has to be very, very hard.

Since you are reading Gracie's Way and this article, I know that you are a growing Christian, interested in growing your faith and living according to God's will. As an ex-teen, I can tell you that you are very fortunate. Unlike a lot of teens, you KNOW what is morally right and wrong. You have opened your heart and your ears to hear God's Word and are striving to do your best to live God's Word.

It is often hard to hear God's voice when you are surrounded by so much pressure to conform to popular culture. This is the age-old plight of teens. Today, however, there is a lot more at stake. Popular culture today flies smack in the face of our Christian beliefs and encourages us to abandon our beliefs.

You are a precious gift from God --- filled with incredible potential and extraordinary gifts to share with the world. It is important that you take extra care in choosing which voice you are going to listen to and follow.

I encourage you to always listen and

watch with your God-filter on. When you see or hear an ad, use your God-filter. What is the ad saying to you? How does the message jibe with your belief system?

It's easier than you think to let your belief system erode ... one little choice at a time multiplied by many choices. And all of a sudden you are wondering how the heck you ended up in the soup! That's why your God-filter is so very important. Think about what you hear. Think about what you see. Remember, advertisers are experts at knowing how to manipulate the consumer!

It's hard to swim against the tide of popular culture ... but you are an Empowered Jesus Girl, so you have everything you need to swim against the tide!

### Deuteronomy 28:2

*And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God.*



## Copy Cat

*100 cats go for a ride on a boat. One jumps out. How many are left?*

*None. The other 99 cats were copy cats.*

Ever wonder why the term "Copy Cat"? Not "Copy Monkey"? Or "Copy Parrot"? Monkeys and parrots are both known more for their mimicking behavior.

Cats are not particularly known to be copiers. What they are known for is being mischievous and being curious. Ever heard the phrase, "Curiosity killed the cat"? Yeah, that's pretty much what happened to our boaters.

They must have been pretty curious to jump in the lake. Not only did they have no plan for how to get back in the boat, but cats hate water. The instant they hit the water, I'm sure

they were painfully reminded of both these facts.

It's not too smart to follow after someone who is exhibiting stupid behavior.

After all, God, in His perfection, created you to be an original, why would you ever settle for being a scared and drowning copy cat?

# Every Difficulty Has A Purpose

By Taylor Hawkins

It's crazy. Another year has come and gone in a flash. It seems like our lives go by so quick. They really do. We only live for a moment, and then we're in eternity. Even though our lives are only a vapor, we have so many experiences that affect who we are and what we do.

Each and every single event that happens in your life, whether big or small, has a purpose. The Lord is shaping and molding you into who He wants you to be through every person you meet, every place you go, and every thing you do.

We've all been through difficulties in life where we wonder why God is putting us through such pain. Many have suffered the loss of a family member, experienced illnesses, faced tough decisions, or even dealt with financial hardships.

In a lot of those cases, we get mad at God when we should really be praising Him for them. When you compare us and our sinful nature to God and His perfect righteousness, we are completely unworthy of anything He gives. I believe the difficulties we face are many times gifts from the Lord.

You might ask how your situation could possibly be a gift from God. It's because through those problems that we face, He shapes us into a tool that He can use for His glory and to help others.

Think about it. If you lost your grandmother a while back to a battle with cancer, and you have a friend who suffers the same loss, you can be such an encouragement to them.

And through opportunities that the Lord may give you, your friend could even come to know Jesus. That is the ultimate gift. If you are ever given the opportunity to lead someone to Christ, you'll understand that it is worth anything you might have to endure in your life.

So no matter how many battles you have to fight in life, remember that the war has already been won. God is molding you and shaping you into the warrior He wants you to be.

God is good, and He never makes mistakes. Just trust in Him, and He will get you through your difficulties. He will use them to strengthen you and ultimately change people's lives!

**1 Peter 5:10**  
*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

**James 1:12**  
*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*



# The Greatest Compliment A Girl Can Get

By Linda Byce

For over 20 years I taught Modeling and Etiquette classes. 90% of my students were teenage girls.

I still have many of the thank you cards and letters from girls and parents thanking me for giving them the self-confidence they needed to become graceful young ladies.

As I look back though, I think about another kind of Grace I should have been teaching them—the Grace of our Lord Jesus CHRIST.

I long to share with young girls the mistakes I made as I entered my 20's, thinking of only ME and my career, with no concern of the plans GOD had for my life. No longer being the kind of role-model I should have been.

As I have aged and became wiser with the years, I now understand what I should have realized so many years before, that GOD'S PLAN is ALWAYS BEST.

HIS PLAN is what we should seek even from an early age. Girls AND guys need to also understand that the mistakes they make now can alter the rest of their lives.

# The Greatest Compliment A Girl Can Get

By Linda Byce

When I was 17, I received the greatest compliment a guy could ever give a girl, although I didn't see it as one at the time.

His name was Ray and he was my first real boyfriend. I was in love for the first time. My heart would flutter each time I heard his voice on the phone or when I saw his mustang turn the corner onto our street. Just to be near him was a joy.

BUT I had strict rules. Not my parents rules but my own. I would only hold hands. No kissing or anything. I believed that ALL that was to be saved for my honeymoon.

After a few months of dating, to my dismay, Ray broke up with me. I was crushed, so broken-hearted. I couldn't understand why.

That's when he told me, "I really do like you BUT you are the kind of girl you MARRY, NOT the kind of girl you DATE."

Of course, I was devastated at the time and did not realize he was giving me the greatest compliment a girl could ever get.

I tell you this to make a point. Girls, That is the kind of girl you should strive to be. And Boys! That's the kind of girl you should strive to date AND marry.

When peer pressure tries to tell you to do otherwise that's when it's time to WALK AWAY. Being a member of the IT GIRLS may be fun right now BUT they are not going to be a part of your life in a couple of years.

Most of them you will never see after High School, but the mistakes you make as you try to be ONE OF THEM may haunt you for the rest of your life.

My advice to you is to follow a TRUE FRIEND, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. HE Will Never Lead You Wrong. And HE WILL Be By Your Side For Eternity.

**Hebrews 13:5**  
*... Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.*



## Eli

Our dog Elijah "Eli" is an English Pointer, a hunting dog. He likes to run, chase and play. He has incredible instincts.

He slowly walks out of the house, head lowered, with ears raised, looking for his next quest. His eyes are sharp, focused, and as he spots something, he tenderly raises one paw up by his side and his snout points at his exact target... then he strikes.

With lightening speed, he takes off after his prey with every muscle in his canine body; he is a fine tuned hunter. We laugh as he chases the poor unsuspecting rabbit around the yard. He is a joy to watch.

Yet there is one big problem with Eli. When we call him, he will not come to us. As he runs through the yard, we

call, "Here Eli, come here boy."

He will stop for a moment, look at us, then take off running again. It's as if he is saying, "Oh no, you're not going to stop me. I'm having way too much fun. I am not going inside." We call him repeatedly, but it's always the same ... stop, stare and run away. So we have no choice but to just let him go.

Well, it's Wednesday night and its getting late. Eli has been out all day. Standing on the front porch we call him and as usual, he stops, stares and runs off. We decide to leave him outside since he will not come in. So around 2:00 a.m., my husband hears Eli playing, and howling in the front yard. He goes out and calls Eli to come in. Eli runs away as usual. Several more times during the night my husband tries to coerce Eli in the house.

Finally, around 4:30 a.m., I hear Eli barking nonstop outside our window. I throw on my robe and run outside. Lightening is popping all around the yard. I call for Eli and this time he runs straight into the house and darts under our bed. Eli is afraid of thunderstorms. The slightest noise of a storm and he immediately runs for protection under our bed.

How often do I act just like this dog? God enjoys watching me grow, learn, explore. He enjoys seeing His beloved daughter enjoying life, but I as I enjoy life I must listen for my Master's voice. The Lord whispers "It's time to come in now." And what do I do... I ignore Him, just like Eli. I don't want to stop having fun. I don't want to go to church; I want to go to the lake. I don't want to help with the youth event; I want to go to the mall. I'm

By Brenda Horne

## Eli (Cont'd)

By Brenda Horne

too busy playing to do what I'm told.

Then it happens, trouble starts popping all around me and I'm stuck in the middle of a storm. So I start barking out prayers, crying for help. Lovingly the Lord opens the door and lets me back in. Allowing me to run under His wing to protect me and love me.

I don't know how long it will take to train Eli to trust us. But I'm sure it will take less time to train Eli than it

will for the Lord to train me...and for that I am truly ashamed.

.....  
*Our precious Eli ran off, one time too many, and was hit by a car several months after I wrote this article. His disobedience ended in destruction and heartache.*

*We miss him terribly.*

*I pray that I do not make the same mistake with my Master.*

Deuteronomy 27:10  
*Therefore you shall obey the voice of the LORD your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."*



## Facing the Giants...

By Brenda Horne

*The me I see: is the me I'll be.*

*The way you live is the way you will die.*

Are the statements true? Explain what they mean to you.

*The me I see is the me I'll be, I agree. You cant do anything if you keep telling yourself No.*

*I also agree with "the way you live is the way you will die, because we all stand for what we live for. Brett*

Romans 14:8  
*If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord*

*I agree with the first statement. If I am a strong and confident person then I can do anything. I do not agree with the second statement because I am growing as a person and I haven't always lived that way. Alyssa*

If we see ourselves as worthless, then that is what we will be. And if we run to sin and live in wickedness, then that is how we will die ... in wickedness.

The only way to change either of these outcomes is through our Lord Jesus Christ. He can help change how we see ourselves when we look through His eyes, He adores us!

*No I don't agree because people can change. I also don't agree with the last one because once again people can change. But if you don't change from the world and go with God you will not change and will die a sinner. Jordan, 13*

He will also help us to run from sin and not to it ! Our God is not waiting to slam us for our mistakes.

Hebrews 11:1  
*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*

*I disagree with the first statement because even if I look down on myself Jesus sees me differently. And I do agree with the other because if you live for sin you will die in sin and if you live for the Lord, you will die for the Lord. Kaitlyn*

No, He is waiting for us to ask for His help with every aspect of our lives so we can live for Him and see the "me he wants us to be"!



## Firefly

By Brenda Horne

It was dusk as I stared out the window.

The endless light blue sky was smeared with streaks of neon orange and pinks. The bright colors intertwined with the fading clouds making the sky shine with brilliance.

As evening continued to fall, the once vibrant sunset was slowly being squeezed downward by the darkness of the night, making their colors disappear into the horizon. The tall green trees faded to black silhouettes. In the distance, shrubs and bushes became eerie, little shadows. While the large trees, that towered next to my window became dark and ominous.

These normal, serene trees seemed

to grow taller and larger. They were now haunting and began taking over the beautiful view I had. My focus turned from the once-beautiful sunset to the over-bearing black trees. When I finally looked through the trees, what was left of the sunset was a starless night. Nightfall had consumed the heavens.

That is exactly how my life felt at the moment. The beautiful parts of my world that God had so graciously blessed me with, were being overpowered by stark shadows. Silently, I prayed, "Lord, how can I fight this darkness? How can I overcome the shadows in my life?"

Then it happened ... it lasted only a millisecond but I saw it ... out of the corner of my eye, a tiny yellow flicker ... then it was gone. Darkness returned quickly. I searched intently. I wanted

to see it again. There it was, quick as a flash, in another place. It now had my full attention.

I scanned the darkness. The shadows were no "match" for the little flare. The darker the shadow was the brighter the flash. The vast night canvas seemed too big for such a small intruder. Yet every time it glowed my eyes went straight to it.

As I played my new "Seek and find" game, I did not acknowledge the black night at all.

I was totally focused on the light.

Several minutes went by and I was totally enthralled, And that's when I realized, God just gave me the answer to my question.

## Lucy Kate

By Kara Murrell

Lucy Kate, my niece, recently started saying my name. It's not perfect by any means, but it is clear enough for me to understand. It brings so much joy to my heart knowing that she recognizes me apart from everyone else, and she chooses to call out my name.

She yells my name when I walk in the door from work. When I disappear to my room at times, she comes searching for me, calling my name. She calls out for me when she is in trouble, to come comfort her. It's a feeling I have never felt before. She trusts me. She needs me. She loves me.

When Lucy Kate calls my name, she usually precedes it or follows up with a mouthful of gibberish which I can rarely make any sense of. Because I do not understand all of her feelings or know the thoughts within that giant mind of hers, I often struggle

knowing what to say to her or do for her when she looks up at me with those big blue eyes.

I have been thinking lately about how delighted the Lord is when we cry out to him, "Abba, Father." There is no comparison to my story. He is thrilled.

Unlike imperfect Aunt Kara, Jesus knows the desires of our hearts when we call out to him. Whether it is pure excitement in response to how he has revealed himself at a certain time, or the sobs that come when we are so hurt that we eagerly seek comfort in Him, He knows exactly what we are saying. He has the answer. He knows how to respond. What to say and what to do.

At this point in my life, I am learning that our God is ALL we need. "And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6b) When I call out to Him, I am trusting Him as my Wonderful Counselor in times of uncertainty; as my Mighty God when I feel powerless and defeated; as my Everlasting Father when earthly relationships fail; as my Prince of Peace in the many storms that come my way.

As I call out to him with one name, "Father", I am believing and trusting in all that He is. Almighty, infinite, comforter, the vine ... He is EVERYTHING.

He delights in our conversations. He delights in hearing from His children. He delights in being the one you call out to in any situation.

I trust you. I need you. I love you, Father.



## Grace In The Wilderness Ministries

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### FOCUS SCRIPTURE VERSE:

Isaiah 43:19

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

Grace In The Wilderness is an out-reach ministry for Today's Busy Woman and Teen Girl. Our mission is to encourage women and teen girls:

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

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

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

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

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*Just do it ... —Nike*

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