

Gracie's Way

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



Plan B

By Sharon Hawkins

The Principal began, "And our last award today is for the International Enrichment Scholarship. The recipient of this award will have the opportunity to travel with a group of 15 other students and chaperones from our State to Italy and France during the month of June of this year. This two-week all-expenses-paid trip will enable the students to tour Rome and Paris while studying their culture, traveling to museums and historical sites.

The applicants have completed rigorous tasks to be considered for this award. Each have submitted a 2,500 word essay on European Culture, served 30 hours of community service with local museums or state parks, and read 5 books from a pre-approved reading list of historical books about the areas that will be visited.

When I call your name, please stand up."

Gracie held her breath as she played her name being called over and over in her head. She had worked so hard for this.

"Please pick me, please pick me, please pick me, please pick me!"

"Amber Wilson"

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!" What had taken her months to prepare for, was over just like that. It didn't take 2 seconds for the dream to slip through her hands and fall to the floor. Were all the hours she had spent on the tasks for applying wasted? Was it all for nothing?

Gracie fought the tears as her friends, seated all around her, offered their condolences. Everyone knew how hard she had worked for this.

Everyone knew she was a History nerd and that she had had her heart set on this opportunity. Ok, now, why were people in front of her turning around looking at her? Really? She could feel her face turning as red as her shirt. She didn't want their pity. What she wanted was to run away.

As soon as the program was over, that's exactly what she did. She bolted to her car leaving her friends in the dust. The day was over and she didn't want to talk about it.

Sometimes our plans don't go, ... well, as we planned. Sometimes we work hard

and it doesn't pay off. Sometimes our high-flying dreams land with a thud.

When Plan A bombs, it's time to start thinking about launching Plan B, C, or even further down the alphabet.

If we don't pass the exam, the real test is will we give up or keep trying? When we don't make the team, will we keep practicing so we can have a shot next time? Or will we just give up?

Just remember failure is not a person, it's something that we learn from, grow from, rise from.

The God of the Universe knows you're not a failure. He made you. Do you think He could even create a failure? No way! And He wants only the best for you, His beautiful, precious creation.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

Maybe, just maybe, Plan B is God's Plan A for you ... ?

Inside this issue:

Plan B	1
Spending Time With God	2
Sewing Your Coat	3
The Answer	3
Camp Marietta	4
When No One Understands	4-5
Drive-Thru Jesus	5
Letter to My Niece	6-7
Facing the Giants	7
About Us	8

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- We're on Facebook. Like our Grace In The Wilderness Page. Look us up...



Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them that are called according to His purpose.



Spending Time With God

By Marie Pritchett

As I looked around the living room I realized that Katie was missing. The rest of the family was relaxing as we watched our favorite tv show.

I went through the house looking for her. I wondered what was so important that she would miss the show that she enjoyed so much.

When I finally found her, she was intensely focused on something. She looked up, smiled and revealed the object of her attention—her Bible.

I started to notice that Katie had begun to "disappear" about the same time each day. Katie is one of the busiest kids I know. Between school, cheerleading, volleyball and youth group activities, she had very little time left in the day.

One day I asked what had brought on this sudden change. "Well, after Pastor John's message a few weeks ago, God spoke to my heart. I know I go to church and do all the activities our youth group is involved in but realized I wasn't spending time growing as a Christian. I committed then to spend time every day with God. It's not always easy to find the time, but it's worth it! This time has helped me to begin to know God better and to listen to the verses Preacher John talks about each week. Most of the time, during service, I just went through the motions but didn't truly understand. I am beginning to know God on my own, to have a real, personal relationship with him."

My little girl (well, not so little anymore) brought me to my knees. My daughter had taught me far more than I could ever teach her.

Katie explained how she committed

her time with God. Here are just a few:

1. Write a specific time and location on your calendar. You will want to choose a time that is the same every day (when you get up in the morning, right after school, or during the time you normally watch tv). Try to avoid putting devotions off until bedtime. You are usually so tired from the day that it is hard to focus or you fall asleep.

2. The only things you will need are:

A Bible

A journal. Write your thoughts, concerns, prayers and how God has spoken to you or what he has done in your life. You will be amazed when going back to see how you have grown and how the prayers you have prayed have been answered.

A *devotional book*. Find one that interests you, maybe a teen devotion or one focused for someone your age or what you may be experiencing in your life. Some have stories to help you relate the verses you've read to your own life.

3. Always begin this time in prayer. Ask God to keep you focused and to help you understand what you're about to read. Sometimes our minds start to wander and before we know it we are thinking of something completely different than our quiet time.

Even if you use a devotional book with verses printed in it, read the verses in your Bible anyway. It helps you to think of that verse as part of God's Word, and not as just a statement from some random book. Plus, you

might find another meaningful verse that wasn't included in the devotional book or some Bibles have explanation of verses at the bottom. This may help you to understand them a little better.

Read the verses until you start to understand them. First, read verse by verse—read each verse several times until you "get" what it is saying, then move on to the next one. Then, go back and read the entire passage, putting its meaning all together in your mind. Even if you're familiar with a passage, try to read it like you've never seen it before—don't skim over it. God might give you an understanding of something you've never noticed before.

Take what you have learned in your devotion time and apply it to your life. Use your journal to write things in your life you need to change. Go back regularly to see if you have made improvements.

Commit to following through on your decision. On a sticky note write your commitment and stick it on your bathroom mirror or bedroom door, anywhere you will see it on a regular basis.

There will be days when you skip devotions. Don't give up! Just try to keep it a high priority and do it whenever you can. If there is a day that your schedule just won't allow you to have the time to do a complete devotion, spend time in the car or while preparing for school or practices talking to God. Share your feelings with Him and ask Him each day to let others see past you and only see Him. Any time that you spend with God, he can use it to teach you and to grow your faith.



From A Girl's Perspective: Sewing Your Coat

By Reid Long

There is an old saying that goes, "If God will see you to it; He will see you through it."

It's true! God will never let you go to battle without being equipped. He doesn't want you to go through a tough situation to tear you down but to make you stronger, to add to your testimony, to comfort those who feel persecuted or all alone.

Romans 8:28 says "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." Not just some things but everything! It's ALL being worked out for OUR good. Every as-

pect of our lives is being sewn together.

Whether the situation be thick as wool, hard as denim, rough as tweed, smooth as satin, or as thin as a thread of silk, it's all being sewn together to make us who we are today. That is such a beautiful thought.

Think about it this way. What if your life didn't cause you to carry your cross daily? What if life was so simple and you didn't have to struggle at all? Your life would only call for silk or satin. You would be so plain Jane. And what would you do when it starts to get cold, when you finally do start to struggle? That thin little coat of silk

and satin isn't going to get you through long.

Okay, now what if God allowed you to have some hard times every once in a while? You would have every thread possible in that coat! It would be so unique and not only that but it would prepare you for any kind of weather. Don't let the devil snuff you out! Keep on keeping on! This too shall pass.

Just remember when you feel like you can't make it, that God will never give you more than you can handle and that He is using you and your story to further His kingdom.



From A Guy's Perspective: The Answer

By Taylor Hawkins

As I go through life, there are two things that have been proven true over and over—that I am sinful and imperfect, and that God is merciful and forgiving.

Many times, I get so down on myself because of my sin that I find it hard to understand how God could still love me. After all, God is so holy and righteous that just one single sin separates me from Him completely. It doesn't matter if I sin once or a million times, I deserve to spend eternity separated from Him.

I know that I am going to sin and fall short of God's standards, but sometimes I catch myself not even thinking about what I'm doing and how it hurts Him. Sometimes I feel like I am literally a slave to my sin. Romans 7:22-

25a says, "I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord..."

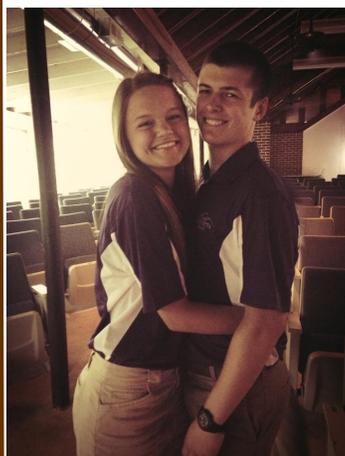
This passage describes my feelings perfectly. After all the things I just said, Jesus is the answer to it all. The God of the Universe came down to this broken world to live a perfect life, so we wouldn't have to.

Every time I think about the fact that He loves me so much that He sacrificed Himself to save a lousy person

like me, it amazes me. The act of Him giving Himself up for me would be like me giving my life up to save an ant.

His love for us is so intense that He suffered through being whipped, mocked, and nailed to a cross just so we wouldn't have to be separated from Him. That is how much He loves us. Just like Romans 7 says, no matter how terrible we feel or how deep our sin grows, "Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord..." I am so thankful for His love. He has given us the key to freedom. Let's not get bogged down by our imperfection. He has given us a new life. We are free. The answer is Jesus!

Would You Like To Have Loads of Fun This Summer?



Taylor and Reid work at Camp Marietta and would like to invite you to Camp this Summer! Most of the Summer is for boys and girls ages 7-12, but there is also a Youth Week in July.

For more information, go to www.campmarietta.com, visit the facebook page Marietta Baptist Camp and Conference Center, or Twitter @CampMarietta.



When No One Understands, God Does

By Sarah Gasque

When I was just ten years old, my world came to a stop. I didn't know it then because I was so young, but the rest of my life was going to be a struggle. My mom Stella was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 28. She decided to go through with chemotherapy and radiation and was given only 1 year to live. She always said that she wanted to live just long enough to know that my brother and I were saved and would meet her in heaven one day.

She got her wish; I was saved at the age of 6. My mother lived 10 years after she was diagnosed which was a blessing from God in itself. I was 10 when she died and my brother was 15. Even looking back on that day I didn't understand what was going on, all the people, the funeral, the sad looks...etc.

My dad remarried a year later and, at age 13, I went to live with my Grandparents. I tried to move back in with my dad, then back to my Grandparents. My nanny and papa were on a fixed income so I couldn't live with them. So I moved in with my aunt

Emily. I lived with her for a very long time then met a boy who I thought I loved. I moved out of my aunt's house, back in with my dad because my aunt didn't allow me to see this boy. My dad and step mom were separated at the time. I moved in with my boyfriend and his family, and I was terrified to even close my eyes at night, scared that something bad might happen. I lived with him for 3 years then moved back in with my dad when we broke up.

Again, it didn't work at my dad's house so I moved in with one of my mom's friends. She ended up getting into a horrible car wreck which left her paralyzed and not able to speak. So I moved back in with my aunt and finally stayed with her for about 2 years. I was shipped around and around and around and never felt like I fit in anywhere. I was ready for a place I could call home. *(Now I'm happily married and we have a home of our own.)*

Going through everything I've been through has made me who I am today. It was never easy and I realize it will

never be easy. I was so young when my mom passed away and I didn't understand any of it until I got a little older.

I grieve about her more now than I ever did when I was young. I realize now what I'm missing and what she is missing. There are times when I have to drag myself out of bed because I don't think I can possibly go through life without her. There are times I think I have forgotten what she looks like or the sound of her voice.

I do know one thing though. Without God, I wouldn't be able to move. He has literally been My Rock--the person I go to when nobody understands what I'm going through. I know that He understands. I know that He feels the pain that I'm feeling. I just have to remember to lay it all at His feet because it would be impossible for me to carry it alone.

The devil tries very hard to break me down and make me doubt my Christianity. He does this because

When No One Understands, God Does (Cont'd) By Sarah Gasque

he knows how badly I crave just to see my mom's face again. I go to bed praying I will see her in a dream. The devil makes me think I'm not saved and that I will go to Hell. But I know he is wrong. I know without a shadow of doubt that I am saved and will see my mom one day. Honestly, that's what helps get me through the day. It gives me comfort and I pray God would return this very second.

It took lots of counseling and anger and tears to get me to where I am

today. I held a grudge against my dad just till a couple months ago. But I realized it was only hurting me and I realized that he is the only dad I have and I should cherish our time together because we are not promised tomorrow. He was hurting also when he lost my mom and everyone deals with things differently.

Just know that somebody out there always has it worse than you do. When you think nobody understands, I promise God does. That's why He sent His

Son to earth so He could feel what we feel. And I am so thankful for my relationship with Him because without Him I have no idea where I would have ended up.

Psalm 71:5

*For you have been my hope,
Sovereign LORD, my confidence
since my youth.*

By Brenda Horne



Drive-Thru Jesus

I love Wendy's chili and French fries! I take one French fry at a time, break it in half, drop the half in the chili, then scoop it up with a big spoonful of chili. I do this until all my fries are gone, then I finish off the rest of my chili, ... it's weird but wonderful.

So when I'm in need of some chili and fries, I head to Wendy's and use the drive-thru window. I drive up to the menu display and holler my order into the intercom. "I WOULD LIKE A SMALL CHILI AND A SMALL ORDER OF FRENCH FRIES!" My 13-year-old daughter asks, "Why do you yell at the poor people taking your order?" "I have to make sure they hear me," I reply. "Mom, the Wendy's in the next county can hear you!"

I complete my order and pull around to the window where I remember to ask the drive-thru window clerk for sour cream and crackers. My daughter says flatly, "You may need to yell at them now because you just busted their eardrums in the intercom!"

"Funny, funny," I reply. The employee smiles, hands me my order and I drive off, never thinking about Wendy's again ... until I decide I want some more chili.

Sometimes I wonder if this is how we treat Jesus. We need or want something, so we pull up to the Throne of Grace in prayer; give our requests, wants and desires; wait for the problems or desires to be solved or given, then head back to our lives never thinking of Jesus again ...until the next time.

The "prayer- order" probably would sound something like this. "Dear Lord, I need... and I want....and can you please be with...and can you help... oh, and Lord, can I add some happiness to that order? Ok Lord, please hurry up and fix everything and hand it to me in a neat little bag so I can get on with my life." Then we pull away from prayer ... and from Jesus ... until our next order, of course.

It is so easy to get caught up in our busy lives, treating Jesus like the "drive-thru" at a fast food restaurant. We quickly stop by, order up some

help and happiness, and then leave Him high and dry in the dust.

What a privilege to have the God of the universe want to have a relationship with you and me! He doesn't need us, you know! He is God! He could push us aside without a second thought.

But He doesn't push us aside; instead he waits patiently ... longing for the time when we finally decide we want a relationship with him. Waiting for when we finally choose to "sit down and stay awhile", rather than the usual ... quick and speedy "Drive-thru."

Matthew 6:7

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

A Letter To My Niece

By Liz Rampey

Sarah,

Your mom said that she was collecting letters of advice for you to draw from as you head out to college. I'm sure that the deadline was a few weeks ago. And, most likely, you have a bunch of letters written beautifully on pretty stationary. Or, perhaps they are typed, but at least printed on cute polka-dotted paper.

And now, here's mine. Late. Plain. Visually impersonal. The late part I really couldn't help. In order to do it from the heart, I had to do it when I could sit down and write without distractions. I never would have been able to write it by hand. I make too many errors when I try to write something, and then it never would have gotten done. The cute part could have been corrected. I am sure Hobby Lobby has some paper with polka dots. However, I decided to let this be part of your lessons about life from Liz. I love polka dots and think they are cute. But, they aren't me. Be who you are.

I read in Life's Little Instruction Book many years ago to "Trust in God, but lock your doors." This is a valuable and practical piece of advice that I'd like to pass along. God gives us common sense and it is dumb not to use it! The nudge from the Holy Spirit leads us to do things. This leading takes us in to places, but it also keeps us out of danger! Trusting your gut does not mean you aren't trusting God. It means that you are aware of the method that He is using to get your attention.

Random advice: Don't waste money on expensive furniture. The up side is that high quality furniture will last forever. The down side is that you will be ready to get rid of your furni-

ture in 7 years or less.

My next piece of advice is to have fun! Don't be too serious or in too big of a hurry to accomplish your goals. Certainly, live wisely. At the same time, have some fun. I was a very serious college student. I went to class, went home, and went to work. All I wanted was to get out of school and get a "real" job. That was my path in life and it went well. On the other hand, that "whopping" salary I made the first year of work made no significant difference on my long-term financial life. So, if you have an opportunity to "waste" money on rent for a year while living somewhere great instead of putting that money toward a house payment, do it if you want. Just don't get carried away. And by all means, don't put it on your credit card.

Life is messy. You can't have fun if you are worried about getting dirty. Emotions are also dirty. Whatever the situation, dress appropriately and deal with it. Wear play clothes and ratty shoes and go out and swing. Or, wear cozy pjs and eat ice cream and cry. Don't wear white clothes and waste time trying to look clean. Be in the middle of whatever you are in. You won't go crazy from letting your emotions out. I can almost guarantee that you will be a total nutcase if you try to keep them in. Not only that, everyone will see how crazy you are but you. People will sense if you aren't willing to be real with them.

Ask for help! Accept help! If you can't reach something on the back of the top shelf at the grocery store, ask someone to get it for you. Give someone else some of your bags if they offer to take them. Don't carry everything by yourself. That's when you drop things and break them.

If I could only tell you one thing, it is to NEVER BRING SOMETHING HOME IF IT'S NOT PERFECT AT THE STORE. Don't bring home anything that doesn't make you feel like a beautiful princess. If it is the perfect dress but it's not the most flattering color, don't buy it. If it's just a little too long but you can wear high heels to make it better, get something else. Wait on God's will for your life and He will let you find the perfect dress in the perfect color and it will be ON SALE!

It should go without saying that most of my advice to you is both literal and figurative. However, just in case you missed it, I'll be more specific. I have never been happy with something I brought home if I even had a moment of hesitation at the store. Furthermore, if I waste my money on something that isn't perfect, I don't have money to spend when the right thing comes along. So, step back and think about being at the store when you have to make decisions from the heart.

This idea is particularly important in relationships. Don't spend time with someone who doesn't understand how to treat you like a princess. Don't try to change him, teach him how to be a prince, or whatever. Your "Should Have Been" Prince will come along and think that you are taken. Then SHBP will try to cram somebody else's fat foot into your dainty glass slipper. A fat foot crammed into a dainty glass slipper is a big mess waiting to happen.

Also, YOU have to be the one to determine if someone is a prince or not. Don't listen to other people tell you how great he is or isn't. Go back to the perfect dress. Your

A Letter To My Niece (Cont'd)

By Liz Rampey

friends may tell you that you look good in it, even if it's not the color you want. And, you might look good, but God's will makes you beautiful.

Time and time again, I've seen young ladies stay with someone for too long because his family loved her or her family loved him. It's just another thing that will hold you in the wrong place if that's not where you're supposed to be.

So ... be who you are, trust God, don't buy expensive furniture, have fun, ask for help, don't buy it if you don't like it, and don't let somebody break your slippers. Of course, there will be countless times when it's just not that easy. You want to stay on the couch in those pjs and cry it out some more, but it's time to get up and get dressed. Or you are sure that he is your prince..... but you never envisioned that he would ride up on a motorcycle... Or the bags are heavy but it doesn't seem like anyone wants

to help....

During those times, remember these verses:

-In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3:6

-If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. James 1:5

-To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to

dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3

-God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

Love, Aunt Liz

(Disclaimer: Shane wants you to know that it is technically possible that your prince could need a little dusting or polishing. It did wonders for him! :) (If you find this to be the case, proceed with caution.)



Facing the Giants...

Does God send people to Hell? Explain.

No, God gave His one and ONLY Son to save us from our sins. You have a choice, you can get saved and go to heaven or you cannot accept his gift and go to Hell. God wants you to love Him willingly, not by force. Jordan, 7th grade

No, He allows people to accept Him and then they will go to heaven. Even if they do something wrong He accepts everyone if they want to be saved. 7th grade

Our God did not create us to destroy us and send us to Hell. Our God created man to have a relationship with Him. God wants a relationship with us ... a relationship with YOU and

To bluntly answer the question, No, God does not send his children to hell. Our sin of un-belief condemns us to damnation. God clearly gave us a passage way into heaven through His Son Jesus. All who believe escape hell. God wants all his children home with Him in Heaven. He loves us. So why would He send us into such suffering as that? Hope 11th grade

No, not opening your heart to God and living for Him is what sends you to Hell.

By Brenda Horne

with me!! How can we know for sure that God loves us and does not want us to go to Hell?

Because He sent His Son to die for us ... to save us from Hell!! That's how we know!

John 3:16

God so loved the world that He sent His only son, that whosoever shall believe in Him will not perish but will have everlasting life.



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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www.WildernessGrace.org**

The time is always right to do what is right. —Martin Luther King

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