

GRACE IN THE WILDERNESS

A MINISTRY FOR TODAY'S BUSY WOMAN



I WILL EVEN MAKE A WAY IN THE WILDERNESS, AND RIVERS IN THE DESERT - ISAIAH 43:19



The Pit

The warm bed feels incredible as I drift toward consciousness. I crack one eyelid. Oh good, it's still dark. Just a few more minutes. ... I'm ... so ... tired.

As a door slams shut down the hallway, my body jerks ever so slightly. My eyes fly open. Where am I?

My eyes start to focus on a thin sliver of light near the corner of the room. Then, they frantically search for the alarm clock.

11:15?! Checkout was at 11:00! I bolt straight up, fumble for the lamp by the bed and start throwing clothes, shoes, and anything else I can grab into my suitcase. As I pull my cell phone off the charger, I realize I was due for an important meeting 45 minutes ago. That's when I throw it into high gear.

It's time to leave. Now!

... The ground is rocky, hard, slimy and cold beneath me. Every part of my body aches. I feel a crushing weight on my head. Something is pinning me to the ground. Where am I?

My eyes search for answers but there is only darkness until I look up to see a circle of light high above me.

This ain't no hotel room, baby. I'm in a pit, a deep, slimy, stinking pit and I'm horrified beyond words.

How did I get here? All I know is that it's time to leave! NOW!!

But I can't move.

The last ten years have been the hardest of my life. I lost my mom after her 3-year battle with cancer in March of 2008. In April of 2010, I discovered my best friend had embezzled hundreds of thousands of dollars from me.

In June 2011, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, followed by double mastectomies in July 2011 and a 2nd reconstruction surgery in August 2011. A month before my last breast surgery in November 2011, my friend was sentenced to federal prison and two weeks after that I was diagnosed with melanoma. Praise God it was stage 1 and they got it all!

Our 14-year-old son, who has Reactive Attachment Disorder, left our home in October 2013 to get help at a wilderness camp. Except for occasional visits home, he will remain there for at least a year and a half. Words can't describe the chaos in our home in the years before his leaving or the heartbrokenness and concern we feel every day for him since he has been gone.

During the last few years, Obamacare has steadily whittled away at my business of 18 years. God has led me to sell a big part of it. I've recently, painfully, one-by-one, laid off all my employees. I miss them terribly and am so burdened for them. The hours I've worked over the last year (up to 80-100 hours and 7 days a week) have taken a huge toll on me emotionally and physically.

By Sharon Hawkins

My continuing battle with chronic constant pain (RSD) began with my first breast surgery. My friend Diana just told me she read it is the most painful condition known to man. I'm pretty sure it is in the top 10.

For 25 years, my dad has fought a terrible illness, Parkinson's Disease. He now struggles with its late stages. He is such an inspiration to all those who know him, especially me.

Through all these trials, God has been so real in my life and has carried me and my family daily through some incredibly tough stuff. So why is it that suddenly I find myself at the bottom of this pit?

I hate it here! And the pit-keeper keeps kicking me while I'm down. "You're a bad mother! Kick! You've not spent enough time with your dad! Kick! You're responsible for your employees being out of work! Kick! You haven't been able to do a newsletter or a conference in months! Kick! You should just give up ministry. You don't have anything that you can say to encourage anyone!" Kick! Kick! Kick! Soon I am kicking myself too.

As much as I know the devil cannot keep me in this pit, I also know the Lord will not force me to leave. The choice is mine. AND I SAY IT'S TIME TO LEAVE, NOW!

Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my Light. Micah 7:8

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*Save the Date—
Our Empowered
Jesus Girl
Conference at Blue
Ridge View Baptist
Church, Pickens,
SC, will be
November 14, 2014.
Watch for more
information coming
soon.*

Matthew 11:28

*He lifted me out of the
slimy pit, out of the mud
and mire; He set my feet
on a rock and gave me a
firm place to stand.*

Special Needs—I Hate Those Words

By Karen Dickerson Buccino

You grow up and think your life will be grand then, within a blink of an eye, your world is turned upside down.

Your friends treat you differently now. Your family doesn't know how/what to say, so you are left out of many "family" functions. Your church turns it's back on you. They have no room for your child.

The schools really don't want a Special Needs class there. That's why my kids went to 4 different elementary schools but we never moved. Your spouse just shuts down because they are in shock and at a lost about what to do.

You find yourself alone, scared and mad. God has left the building. He's nowhere to be found. How can that be?? Your days are filled with terror and your nights are filled with tears. You think why?? Why me? Why them? I hate those words ... Special Needs.

Your days now are filled with what ifs.

What if I can't do this? What if I die? Who is going to take care of them? Will they ever be happy? Will my kids be sad?

How am I going to protect them in a world where if you are not perfect you are nothing. How can this be happening? You look at your child and you think they are perfect, but others see Special Needs. They see burdens. They pity us and some even laugh. I hate those words ... Special Needs.

We've been judged by folks who say they love us. We've been discriminated against by places that are suppose to be havens. We've been let down by other's stupidity and hurt by complete strangers. We've been on this journey now for 29 years. I wish I could say things are perfect now. But they're not. We are still scared. We still cry. We still have to put up with mean people and we are still not welcome in some places. But I can say we've made it this far, a little worse for wear but we made it.

Special Needs, I still hate those words but without them I would not be the fighter that I am today. I would not get to see the world through my boy's eyes where everything is magical.

Jimmy and I would not be as close, my girls would not be champions for others with disabilities and we would not have the friends we have now. God never left me. He gifted me with a journey that not many would survive. He lead me to where I am today. He made me strong. So I guess I owe it to Special Needs and God that I am the way I am.

I still hate those words, Special Needs. But in spite of those needs, I have raised a beautiful family, a loving family with children that see no wrong in anyone. That love others unconditionally. So even though I hate those words I am learning to be grateful for them. I ask for prayers to help me through the next 50 yrs. And when I get to heaven I'm gonna get a Special Chair because I've earned it.

The Right Track

By Heidi Neil

I thought my life was right on track. I had grown up in a Christian home, prayed about who I'd marry, then met Dan at a Christian college.

We got married right after graduation, started our careers and began to serve in our local church together. Dan has amazing gifts of speaking and teaching, so we gravitated toward leadership roles in worship and small group teaching. We started a family, and, after 17 years of marriage, made a big move to a new state because Dan's job was transferred. We said goodbye to our friends and our church roles and started a new life hundreds of miles away.

I assumed that everything would go forward from there, that we'd pick right up in a new church and continue to serve together. But something was terribly wrong. About six months after moving, it was apparent that my husband was not himself. I thought he was depressed because his career, even after moving to a new location, had never been fulfilling to him. But I had completely misdiagnosed the problem.

One evening Dan came home from work

and said we needed to talk. He announced he was leaving me for someone else. He described his long history of pornography addiction that started in his teens, which then led to affairs. We'd been married for 18 years at that point, and suddenly, according to the timeline of his infidelities, 12 of those years crumbled into a pile of rubble. I was shocked, speechless. He had hidden these sins very well ... I had no idea.

Not only did Dan say he wanted to leave me, but he made it very clear that he did not know God and did not care to. My husband, the one with whom I'd served in ministry for 18 years? He had been such an encouragement to many, and he'd had an especially tender heart for new believers who we shepherded in small groups. How on earth was it possible that he never knew God, and could so easily throw away every truth he'd ever taught in order to pursue his own selfish desires? This cut into my heart more than the knowledge of the affairs.

After Dan left with suitcase in hand, I called my parents and my closest friends, breaking the news through tears of what had just happened and begging

them to pray, pray all night!

What happened next was nothing short of miraculous. God was grabbing hold of Dan in a hotel room, the Spirit was drawing him, the prayers were working. Four hours after he left, Dan came home. When he pulled up in front of the house, I saw him and braced myself. "What next?" I thought, wondering how much more I could take. But he trudged up the front lawn looking like the most broken person I'd ever seen. Within five minutes, Dan was crying out to the Lord, giving his life to God in a way that he never had before, fully surrendering everything and begging God for forgiveness and mercy. There was much cleansing of his soul that needed to be done, but we have an amazingly *big God* who could handle the full weight of Dan's sin!

The very next day, as I struggled to grasp hold of anything that made sense in my world, the Lord ministered to me in amazing ways. But He also had a word of instruction. He asked me to start praying with my husband. Now, being a Christian for most of my life, this might seem like a simple thing. No, far from it!

The Right Track (Cont'd)

By Heidi Neil

I had always looked at prayer like this: great at mealtimes with my family, just fine with a list of requests in a group, but otherwise only done *by myself*. Praying to God is such a vulnerable thing! It brings to light our inmost thoughts, worries, fears, joys, pain. I never wanted to show such vulnerability in front of my husband. I am very personal with my God, but being personal like that in front of Dan? No way! After wrestling through how I felt about all this, I knew that I needed to surrender and do what God had asked of me. With much fear and trepidation, I told Dan that evening that I'd like to start praying together. He loved the idea and we began that very night.

We have committed to pray every night together. And because we stepped out in this act of obedience, God Himself began

building a new foundation of intimacy in our marriage.

The personal nature of my prayers used to be something I held back from my husband. Now that personal place where we meet each night in prayer is what helps us see each other's heart. We bring our troubles, our fears, our joys, our thanks, our requests before our Father together, and it has knit us together in a way that I never would have thought possible.

This man who betrayed me and brought unspeakable pain into my life? Yes, he is the one with whom I join hands each night to enter the throne room of the Almighty.

It has been a long, hard road. Counselors, therapy groups and friends have

played roles in our recovery and restoration. But the Wonderful Counselor knew from day one what He wanted from me – to fully surrender my will and start praying with my husband.

I can report with pure joy that Dan has been victorious, ever since the night he came home, in leaving behind the addictions that had entangled him. I look forward to many more years of praying with my husband, my partner in life, my best friend.

Psalm 145:14

The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.

Watching God's Servant Go Home

By Betty Vest

Have you ever witnessed a child of God as he takes his journey home? I did. On January 19, 2014, at 9:30 p.m. Oh, the grace of God!

Psalm 116:15

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

I need to tell you a little history about this man. I met Larry in July of 1962. We dated for three weeks and we were married on August 11, 1962. I was 17 years old and he was 20. Neither of us knew the Lord at that time.

We were married 5 years, with 2 babies, and on the verge of divorce. But God had other plans for our lives. In May of 1967, Larry got gloriously saved, washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He got saved in a little old school house in Locust Hill under the ministry of Richard Case. Not only did I have a new husband and my kids a new daddy but we had a new home. That very day we began our journey for the Lord. Praise God!!!

Larry was called to preach in 1972 and was ordained by Pastor Jack Shook. Larry pastored Calvary Baptist Church in Travelers Rest, SC for 2 years.

Evangelist Larry Vest was the most loving, most wonderful lover of souls and my husband of fifty one and a half years. God blessed us with 2 children, Larry Vest, Jr. (Punk to all who know him) and Rhonda Vest-Lindler. We have also been blessed with 4 grandchildren, plus 2 adopted and 9 great grands, with one on the way. Our lives have been full of love.

Larry then attended Tabernacle Bible College for 3 years and graduated in 1978. Then the Lord called him to pastor a church in Columbia, SC for 21 ½ years. He resigned in 1999 and went into evangelism and we are still at the same church. In the Columbia area, he became known as “the tract man”. Everyone he met got witnessed to about their destiny when their lives were over and they stand before God.

Roman 10:15

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!

God was so good to us. Although, there are so many things that happened on our journey that we just can't understand!

In 2007, we began to see little changes in Larry. We went to a neurologist for his opinion. That day Larry was diagnosed with Dementia.

I thought, “Oh God, why?” God was still the same loving God He had always been but this was to begin another journey. I was reminded that God is so good on the mountain tops and in the valleys. God's grace is sufficient.

Larry had problems remembering but, until the end, God gave him the gift of sharing the great story of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, what a servant! There are so many stories I could tell but some of them will have to wait until the next time.

For the last few years, we would talk about the way we wanted this and that to be if either of us got sick. The main thing was we would stay side by side until God chose which one of us was to go first.

The last year or so we were never apart except for a few doctors' appointments. It seems our love and devotion for each other blossomed and if possible we loved each other even more. We agreed to start praying that God would show mercy to this faithful servant.

I prayed that when the time came and I could no longer lift and care for the love

Watching God's Servant Go Home (Cont'd)

By Betty Vest

of my life that God would take him home. Two weeks before his homegoing, Larry had a slight stroke and could no longer help me and we would pray and cry. The nurses had us take him to the ER just to have them check him.

While at the hospital, some dear friends (Duain and Faye Wittemore) came to see us. I know this was not by accident but orchestrated by God. He was preparing Larry for the greatest event in his life.

The nurse came to draw a blood sample and, as he always did, Larry made sure she was ready to meet the Lord. She asked Larry to sing a hymn. He turned toward her and began singing "Take My Hand Precious Lord."

At that moment, there was the sweetest spirit in that room.

Everything seemed fine so we were able to take him home that night. I thank God for good friends. Duain and Faye decided to spend the night with us. My granddaughter Jessica was there and helped get him settled back in the bed (she was a PaPa's girl).

Duain told Larry goodnight and Faye was talking to Larry. He raised his precious hand toward heaven and said, "Praise the Lord, I'm going home."

Oh the sweet holy spirit that filled our living room. Faye said, "Brother Larry, I wish I was going with you." He replied, "It won't be long." Everyone went to bed about 3:00 a.m. Larry and I talked.

He told me how much he loved me and thanked me for taking care of him. He said he hoped he wasn't too much of a burden. I assured him that he was never a burden to me and reminded him how very much I loved him. Everything seemed to be fine.

He asked me to lay down beside him but I said that we both couldn't fit in that hospital bed that had been brought out the week before. He asked where I would be sleeping and I said that I would be beside him until the end.

So I laid on the couch beside him. He smiled and said, "I love you." I told him that I loved him too. We both said, "I'll see you in the morning." We fell asleep around 4 a.m. that Sunday morning. At

6 a.m. I woke to a sound I had never heard before. It sounded like something I can't explain. I hollered for Faye and Duain. God showed such mercy and grace. No pain, no struggling, all was peaceful. Praise God, Praise God!!! God is so good.

One day I will see my love "in the morning."

Grace In The Wilderness readers: At a later date, I will share what I found in the bank lockbox when I went to get papers before the funeral and how Larry continued to witness even after he left this earth.

Our niece, Marie Pritchett of Grace In The Wilderness has also been on a journey of her own but she remains a faithful servant just like her Uncle Larry.

Matthew 25:21

His Lord said unto him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

My Source of Strength

By J. Hannah Lloyd

As a woman faced with the consequences of raising three small children on a limited income with sporadic child support, I was more than destitute. Relying on God then became my source of strength and provision. However, I had long trusted him. In fact, He was the reason I was still alive.

Married twelve years to a brutal man, and unable to find anyone in my family, or his, to believe my cries for help, I was alone without resource or assistance. Even local law enforcement denied my pleas. But when I escaped with my life, and the lives of my children, I was amazed at the miracles that followed. The steps of my new life easily fell into place as I continued to rely on God for my very existence.

Frightened to the point of insanity, beaten and battered as the wife of an upstanding, well-known man, I had long

lived under the assumption I was happy. But I wasn't. Every day was lived in fear of impending death, as violent episodes often occurred when he was upset or angry.

I was also frightened for my children. Statistics have now proven children growing up in an environment where their mother is abused are also targets of the same man. In fact, it's never safe when violence occurs in any relationship. Even Christian families, aren't exempt from domestic violence and abuse. Because if God isn't truly in control, anything is possible.

Many times, after my escape from abuse, food was scarce. But God always came through for us; providing in ways seemingly impossible to man. Several times enough change was found to purchase needed milk and bread for the children.

Even small change found on a sidewalk was enough to provide what was needed to complete a purchase.

Then learning to trust in God for what was needed became a lifestyle of faith. What I absorbed while struggling built a foundation of trust that cannot be matched. Even today those same principals are utilized on a daily basis. The fundamentals of Christian faith are now accentuated because of what I learned through my struggles.

Psalms 37:23

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way.



He Is Jesus

By J. Hannah Lloyd

HE IS JESUS

*Jesus said,
"You have now*

*seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking
with you." (John 9:37)*

*When you've just lost your best friend
And that friendship had an end
When your heart has much to mend
There is Jesus*

*When you're troubled with life's pain
And there's much more loss than gain
When your tears fall down like rain
There is Jesus*

*When you've done all that you know
But the answers are too slow
Just reach out and you will know
There is Jesus.*

*He is waiting just for you
With a love that is brand new*

*He will see you make it through
He is Jesus*

*He will take your shattered dreams
Take your plans and broken schemes
And He'll fix them by His means
He is Jesus*

*He will wipe away your care
Just reach out for He is there
All His love with you He'll share
He is Jesus*

Journey Of God's Plan

By Ashley Dykes

I met my husband Rob in the fall of 2009 and we began dating in February 2010 and were married by the end of that year.

My dad had always told me that the Lord had something big planned for my life and although he didn't know what it was, he believed that based on some previous life experiences that the Lord would have some great things in store.

I have just begun to see some of those great things unfolding. Rob came to South Carolina to study Theology at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (GPTS) for a 4-year degree.

When we first met he expressed that he felt the Lord was calling him to return to Wales (where his family currently lived) upon graduation and to minister the gospel there. So, I always knew that if I were to marry him, then I would be agreeing to move to Wales in 2013.

As things progressed in our relationship and as we desired to get married, we saw every little thing come together. Even my mother's prayers had been specifically answered in regards to the timing of our meeting, dating and wedding! All of this was a secret to me until we were engaged and she shared with us how she had been specifically praying and how consequently the Lord had specifically answered.

As the time drew nearer and nearer to May 2013 (our projected departure date) the move was looming over me, but all the while, I knew if this truly was the Lord's will for our lives, then He would give the grace for me to make the move.

We started researching visa requirements for me in early 2012. In late July of 2012, the UK Border Agency introduced new financial requirements that had to be met in order for a British citizen to bring over their non-British spouse. This was devastating as we didn't know how the funds could possibly be raised for us.

Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Cardiff, Wales had agreed to let Rob do a 2-year internship upon graduation and, once this financial requirement was announced, they had the entire 2 year salary raised for us in about a month's time!

We were blown away and rejoicing in the Lord's goodness to us in providing the necessary funds. In March of 2013 I applied for my spousal visa settlement in preparation for our move at the end of May.

In April, we were devastated to find that my application had been denied due to the financial requirement not being met for the 6 months prior to the application. To our surprise not only was Rob to meet the requirement upon his employment in the UK, but he was to have met it for the 6 months prior to my application as well.

We were brought to our knees with this denial, realizing that our dependence is solely upon The Lord and that His ways are higher than ours and His timing is perfect. We decided to appeal the decision and began the lengthy process in April. We were brought to a halt this summer, while The Lord allowed for our time to be extended in South Carolina. My husband's US student visa expired at

the end of May and he was approved for a one year extension into 2014.

This allowed us to not be separated during our waiting period. We had shipped all of our belongings to the UK in April and had been living at my parent's house ever since. The waiting was especially hard on Rob as his desire to go to Immanuel Presbyterian Church was growing intensely.

As the summer continued we received various correspondences regarding our visa appeal and began to realize the entire process could take up to a year or longer.

In September, Immanuel Presbyterian Church decided that it was best to consult with a lawyer regarding our situation. We were advised that Rob was to return to the UK ASAP and commence his 2-year internship, and get the 6 months of working with the required financial threshold behind him, in the event that our tribunal appeal would be unsuccessful and that I would need to reapply.

Meanwhile I was to wait in South Carolina for the tribunal visa appeal to run its course. This of course was devastating news. We were also advised that I was not to try and visit Rob in the UK during this process as it might "sully my record" in the event I was turned away at the airport, BUT if I did want to visit him I was to apply for a family visitor visa given our pending settlement visa denial.

On September 12, 2013, Rob and I said our teary goodbyes not knowing when we would see each other again. I applied for my family visitor visa the following week knowing that this was our only option to

Journey Of God's Plan (Cont'd)

By Ashley Dykes

be together and it needed to be pursued. This was a trying time as an approval meant an almost instant reunion, while a denial meant months of separation.

Joshua 1:1-9 became a special passage to us during this time as the theme of "being strong and courageous" is emphasized. During this time, I had a confidence that I can't describe knowing that The Lord would hear our prayers and see us through.

After 3 weeks of being separated I received the wonderful news in the subject of an automated email, "your UK visa has been approved". That was it!

I was able to join Rob in the UK while he was working and, at the time of this

writing, I have been in the UK for 2 months and adjusting wonderfully! I am so thankful to be here and so thankful for The Lord undertaking and giving grace and providing.

His timing is perfect. We are not through it yet, though. Our tribunal court hearing will be on January 8th. If this hearing is successful, it means I would be granted my spousal settlement visa and could stay here with Rob. However, if unsuccessful it means I would have to return home on March 17th and reapply for a spousal settlement visa. We have been advised that humanly speaking there is no reason for our tribunal to be successful in January.

But as The Lord's people, we know that His Word is full of the humanly impossible things becoming possible. No matter the outcome, we have learned that God's timing is perfect and that He is faithful and knows what is best for us, and that is our confidence.

Proverbs 3:5-6

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and lean not on your own
understanding, in all your ways
acknowledge Him and He shall direct
thy paths.*



Barefootin'

Every southern girl knows you are only supposed to wear white shoes

from Easter to Labor Day. But did you know that beginning May 1, they say it is okay to go barefoot outside?

Who are they, anyway? The shoe police?

Whoever they are, let's all admit right now it sure feels good to take off our shoes, wiggle our toes, sink them into the squishy cool grass and feel the stillness. Something about it grounds us. *You know you want to go do that right now.* Inside each of us big girls is a little barefoot girl who remembers carefree days.

This little barefoot girl always loved it when my mom would buy those \$.99 Borden frozen cream pies at the grocery store. What I loved most about them was that they were in aluminum pans, perfect for making mud pies. I have the fondest memories of sitting in the grass pouring water and stirring red dirt as my stirring stick bumped along the ridges of the pan. I still remember the salty taste. Yes, I sampled a few of my pies. Didn't you?

Another sweet memory was swinging in my tire swing. It wasn't just any tire swing. It hung by a steel cable around the huge limb of an oak tree at least 20

feet high. I always wondered how my dad got it up that high. And when I would swing it was from the top of a hill so I went soaring into the heavens.

Whether I was making dirt delicacies or swaying in my Goodyear, you can bet I was doing it shoeless. I learned this art from my mom. She loved the outdoors. Her flower gardens were like the garden of Eden. Whenever possible, she was outside working in her flowers, and she was barefoot.

Flowers have never been my thing, and they still aren't. Don't get me wrong, I love flowers, especially the kind that come in a box or a vase from the flower shop or those that are beautifully manicured in someone else's yard.

Flowers just don't love me. I think they fake looking wilted in the store for fear that I'll take them home with me.

While I did not inherit my mother's gifts for nurturing flowers; as a little girl, I did get her love for feeling the grass between my toes. When did I lose that love? When did I become afraid to walk without shoes outside, afraid to step on a bee or a rock? If the truth be known, I'm more afraid of messing up my pedicure.

On June 8, 2011, I received the devastating news that I had breast cancer. The first thing I did when I got home that day was kick off my shoes. I headed out

the back door and I put my feet squarely in the grass.

Something about the cool crispness made me feel alive, invincible, refreshed. Maybe I just needed to remember those carefree days when I played in the yard while Mama dug and watered.

That June day three years ago, when my world fell apart, I longed to be comforted in Mama's arms and to hear her say that everything was going to be all right. But three years before that she had gone on to heaven after her battle with cancer. She wasn't there, ... but God was.

He held me that day in her place as I cried out to Him. Since then He's been more than faithful to me, and three years later, I am still cancer free. I've remained loved and held even on the hardest days.

He met me right there in the grass that day and He cradled me like a little child. He told me everything was all right.

And that is when this little barefoot girl knew in her heart that it was.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

*The Lord said, "Remove your sandals
for the place on which you are
standing is holy ground."*

Hello My Name Is Sandra

By Sandra Capps

Hello, my name is Sandra, and I'm a codependent. If you have spent a lot of time with an addict or alcoholic, perhaps you are too. Codependency is defined as a psychological condition or a relationship in which a person is controlled or manipulated. I have been married to an addict for over thirty years. Believe me, I know about being manipulated.

There was a time in our marriage that my husband did seem to care about doing better. He went to rehab and we enjoyed our marriage and our family for a few years. I remember so vividly when our lives started falling apart. My husband was hurt at work. He was never able to work again.

The constant pain in his back played havoc with his addictive nature. When he went to the doctor, he was like a kid in a candy store. He would manipulate his doctor into giving him prescriptions for pain medication to help him sleep and anything else he could think of. It wasn't long before my husband started abusing prescription drugs.

Our marriage was very rocky at this point. He did seem to care about my feelings, but would make promises that he knew he would never keep. I would believe the lies. Our marriage was like a ride on a roller coaster. Unfortunately, there were way more downs than there were ups.

As the years passed, he became more involved in drinking and taking drugs. Just as God's Word says in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Satan knows our every weakness, and, boy, did he put the temptation right there in my husband's path. The drugs and alcohol were tearing our family apart. My husband was so far into this vicious cycle that he did not care about anything except his next high. He was worse than I had ever seen him.

If you can't imagine the stress and pain addiction causes, STOP and thank God now. Only those affected by drugs and alcohol can truly understand the evil

that it is.

At this point, I had hurt so much I did not know where to turn. I prayed about it. I tried to turn it over to God, but it was so painful. God started speaking to my heart. He reminded me of a meeting at our church. This meeting was *Serenity Family Addiction Recovery*, based on the Bible-derived 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I didn't want to go to these meetings. After all, my husband was the addict. I did go, though, with a chip on my shoulder. Little by little I began to realize that this 12-step meeting was for me. I could not change the addict, but I could change how I dealt with the addict's behavior.

My life had become unmanageable. I had come to a place where I could turn it over to the care of God. I found people who were going through the same thing I was going through, people who supported me and understood what I was going through. I found a sponsor who helped me pick up the pieces and use the tools that the 12 steps provided.

I wish I could say that my husband finally found help and started living for the Lord. I cannot. His addiction to alcohol and drugs has ruined our marriage. It has torn our family apart.

Nothing has changed with the addict but, praise God, plenty has changed within me. God wants what is best for us.

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." I have hope in Jesus Christ. Only He can take this situation and work it for good.

Perhaps you too have been affected by an addict. I urge you to find a 12-step or Al-Anon meeting near you. If you are not a Christian, I urge you to turn your life over to God. He is the only one that can fix it. After all, if we could have fixed it we would have a long time ago.

Let go and let God carry you through the storm. I surely don't have all the answers, but I do know who does. Put your trust in Jesus Christ as you live one day at a time.

*God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot
change,
courage to change the
things I can,
and the wisdom to know the
difference.*

*Serenity Family Addiction
Recovery—
12 Steps to Healing*

Struggling with addiction or the addiction of a loved one? Come find hope and help at Serenity Family Addiction Recovery, an on-going, Christ- and Bible-centered recovery program.

The meetings are held in strict confidentiality and anonymity.

Join us on Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. at Blue Ridge View Baptist Church in Pickens, SC.

*Please call 864-878-1687
for more information.*





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FOCUS SCRIPTURE VERSE:

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

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

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

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

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Check us out on Facebook—Grace In The Wilderness and at www.WildernessGrace.org

Don't lose hope. When the sun goes down, the stars come out. —Unknown

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