



Gracie's Way

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



Hurdles

By Sharon Hawkins

At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Lolo Jones was favored to win the 100 meter hurdles. She pulled ahead of her competition in the first ten seconds of the race.

All eyes were on her as she effortlessly cleared hurdle 1, then in rapid succession—2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8.

What happened next can only be described as heart-breaking for Lolo fans, including many Americans who first fell in love with her the night of this race.

Lolo clipped the top of the 9th hurdle with her right heel, slowing her down to finish seventh place. Her rival and American teammate, Dawn Harper, took home the gold.

After she crossed the finish line, she hung her head. She knelt, doubled over in tears and pounded the track with her fist.

She had trained so hard. She was so hopeful. The difference between her time and

the one that earned gold was .2 seconds. So close and yet so far.

Fast forward four years to the London Olympics, 100 meter hurdles, Lolo's chance to redeem herself from the heartbreak of 2008. But it was not to be.

In the year leading up to the 2012 Olympics, Lolo suffered two hamstring injuries and a spinal cord setback that left her bedridden for weeks. Despite these challenges, she qualified for the team, and finished fourth in the race proving she could still compete as an athlete in the Olympic Games.

She was so disappointed that she didn't get a medal. But she told the media she would like to compete again in the Rio Olympics in 2016.

Lolo is a devoted Christian and says that maintaining her purity until marriage has been her biggest hurdle yet, one she is committed to achieving.

Hurdles. Gracie knows all about them. Academic performance ... Body image and self-acceptance ... Peer pressure ... Time manage-

ment ... Parent communication ... Low self esteem ... Goal setting ... Stress ... and, oh yes, that Purity one.

Today's busy teen no sooner feels she has cleared one hurdle until another one approaches.

What's a girl to do? RUN FOR THE FINISH LINE! NEVER GIVE UP AND NEVER LOOK BACK, that's what! You can do it!

Focus on the prize ... Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. Philippians 3:13

You don't have to do it alone ... In John 16:33, Jesus promises us help. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Life is seriously hard, but, with Christ's help, we can overcome one hurdle at a time, even the big ones.

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Philippians 3:14

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

It Could Have Been Me

By Brenda Horne

During the summer of my senior year, my family temporarily moved to Dallas, Texas for my fathers work. He was building a restaurant in the downtown area so we rented an apartment and that is where I met Angie. Angie and I were both 18 years old and she and I became friends.

Angie was not like any of my friends back home in Southeast Georgia. Her lifestyle was much different than mine.

She grew up in this small apartment complex in downtown Dallas with temptations I had never been exposed to. I met several of her friends and learned very quickly that heroin and alcohol were a huge part of their life. I had to distance myself from them due to their addictions, yet Angie and I continued to be friends.

As Angie and I grew closer as friends, I talked to her about my faith in Jesus and she confided in me that she was a lesbian. Homosexuality was not a temptation I struggled with. I was not attracted to girls.

As I got to know Angie and saw the hardships she faced with men, abusive boyfriends and drugs, it helped me understand how easily girls can fall into homosexuality.

For the rest of the summer, I continued to talk to her about how God wants more for her life. That she has a choice in the decisions she makes in her life. Angie did finally go to church with me.

When my father's job was completed and summer was over, it was time to return home. I have not seen Angie

since that summer, but I pray for her when she crosses my mind. I do hope she allowed the Lord to enter into heart and her life.

I look back at that summer and think "WOW" had I not had a strong foundation in the Lord and His word, I may have fallen into the same lifestyle as Angie and her friends.

I was no better than they were. The only difference between me and them was Jesus Christ! I was a Christian teenager faced with choices, and I chose to follow my God.

Satan tells lies and ensnares millions of teenagers into the homosexual lifestyle every day. Don't let him!! Homosexuality is a sin; it is a choice you make. It is just like any other sin that makes us fall short of the glory of God.

We choose to drink, smoke, gossip, lie, and **we also choose whether or not** to practice homosexuality. Satan wants to take hold of your mind, he wants you to believe you were born homosexual, that you have no choice, you have no chance.

He wants you to believe there is no hope for you. Satan condemns you for the sins you have committed or desire to commit. Satan is a liar!!

The truth is ... our God **DOES NOT** condemn you, God says you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds (Ephesians 4:23).

He can transform your mind so that when you are faced with sinful situations you can stand firm in your belief and not fall into Satan's trap.

Satan is no match for the truth of Jesus Christ!!

I will always remember that summer with Angie and her friends and I was happy to know them all.

But what I will remember the most is how Jesus Christ showed me the truth and led me away from a lifestyle ...

... that could have been me.

John 3:17

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Romans 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...



Letter To My Teenage Self

By Bridget Farmer

So I If I could write a letter to myself as a teenager what would I say?

To ask that would assume that I have it all together now as an adult and that I have grand advice to give myself and to you, the inevitable reader. But the truth is that would be so far from the reality of my life.

So first I have to admit to you that this letter, even though it is written to the myself of many (many) years ago, I write it to myself now.

First I would say, and remind myself now, you are created in the image of God, and He loves you. Nothing you can do will change that fact.

So stop, breath, and rest in the knowledge that you are fearfully and wonderfully made.

As a teenager, you are beginning to enter womanhood. Being a woman has a special position in God's crea-

tion.

Just think about this, God made deep darkness and brilliant light, then massive land with mountains and the crashing waves of the sea. He made animals of all sizes, shapes, colors and textures. He looked at everything and said it was good. Good is good, right. We like good.

But God was not satisfied with this good, so He formed a unique creation, formed in His image and likeness, so that His creation resembles Him. God made man. The male of man, not manhood, but masculine Adam may have run fast with the gazelles or climbed as high as he could in the tallest tree to pick fruit for his lunch.

But God likes relationships and knew Adam was alone. It was not good for Adam to be alone, so He made a friend for Adam.

God made Eve, who was shaped and fashioned like you, the female of manhood. Both male and female are formed in God's image, but the

woman is the final creation, the glory of the created world, and you are that creation.

You are formed in the likeness of God and are His masterpiece. So I would tell myself to take time in the morning to look at the sky as the sun streaks through the clouds and creates vibrant colors and it blinds my eyes.

And I would tell myself that as glorious as that sunrise is, I am God's masterpiece.

Psalm 139:14

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.



How To Be A Happier You

By Marie Pritchett

For I know the plans I have for you," de-

clares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

How can you please anyone else if you don't please God?

I define success as when I decided to focus on pleasing God instead of oth-

ers. In school, it's so easy to get wrapped up in what everybody else is doing and what others think is cool. We all want to feel like we fit in.

We want to make sure we wear the right clothes or have the latest purse, shoes and jewelry. Now, these are not always bad things but if you let it dominate your life then, yes, it can be a bad thing. The world is screaming for you to conform to what it says you should be like.

You have to shift from thinking about others and what they think, to thinking about God and what he wants for you and your life. When we stop trying to figure out how we fit in, and instead, try to figure out what God wants from us, God can then begin to work through us.

Debbie Downers and Negative Nancy's

When I think about the people who are constantly complaining, or

How To Be A Happier You

By Marie Pritchett

spend a lot of their time being negative in general, they are living in an “all about me” world.

How does it make you feel to be around these people? Even if you are in a great mood, being with a “Debbie Downer” or a “Negative Nancy” can make you feel horrible! God wants us to let others see him shining through us, not make people run when they see us coming.

Try to be conscious of your words and how others look at you. If you smile and try to have a positive outlook on life, then others will be drawn to you.

People who lift you up

I've found that you're going to be encouraged and feel good about yourself when you have positive people around you. Surround yourself with people who live their life for God and not for themselves, but people who also keep you grounded and positive as well.

Equally Yoked

It is hard trying to fit in with people and what they think is the “perfect person”. Sometimes you end up not feeling like yourself but a person that someone else says you should be.

You try to talk in a way that you don't talk, dress in a way you don't want to dress, go to places you normally wouldn't go and do things you nor-

mally wouldn't do.

After a while, you realize that you have lost yourself and who you really are. Has this happened to you?

If it has, you need to find a group of friends that accept you for who you are—the good and the bad, friends who not only lift you up but encourage you to be the best person you can be.

Strive to live your life for God and surround yourself with people who want the same thing. This will make you a happier you.



Where I'm From

By Jordan Horne

Sometimes we can share our faith; even in the most unlikely places. My daughter, Jordan, had a homework assignment to write a poem, using another author's outline and this was the outcome. —Brenda Horne

I am from “Jesus loves me” to John 3:16

From church pews to youth rallies

I'm from arts and crafts, coloring pages to canvas

From Elmer's glue to acrylic paints

I'm from be kind to others

From know what you believe, to stand firm and stand tall

I'm from sports, volleyball and basketball

From scraped knees to bruises

From the squeak of shoes to the sound of the whistle

From the rush of the locker room to the roar of the crowd

From exciting wins to disappointing losses

I am from those moments, a team player, full of confidence and compassion

Where I'm From

I am from Yes Mam's to No Sirs

From please to thank-yous

I am from home cooked meals, cornbread muffins and biscuits and gravy

I am from the South

From sweet tea to fried chicken

From camouflage to “How ya'll doin?”

From football games to four-wheeling

2 Corinthians 8:7

But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also.



Come A Little Closer— Look What's On The Inside

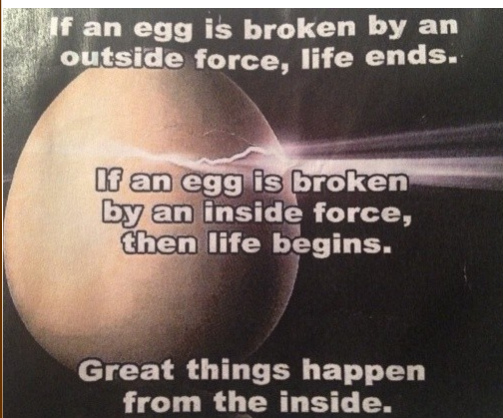
By Sammie Richards

Growing up in a small town, in a small house, I was the youngest of six. I grew up with hand-me-down clothes and a new pair of shoes once a year. Our mom made most of our clothes even our dad's shirts that he worked in.

When I was 7, our mom was left with raising the last three of us alone on a whopping \$300 a month. Life was tough for her, but she never complained. She made life happy for us.

Life got hard at times. But putting her faith in God, He saw her through!

Growing up, I never knew I was poor until I reached high school and kids brought it to my attention. I was often at the bad end of finger pointing, name calling and laughter. I cried a lot in school, hated going and slowly slid to the background. My mom and a few true friends would say, "You are beautiful on the inside." At that time, it didn't help much.



Today I am much older and I see life differently than before. Looking back, I see a beautiful home, where I was kept safe and warm.

My tummy was always full and there was happiness on the inside of our little home. Our mom took us to church every week. We walked to every service.

The little house may have looked bad to many on the outside but on the inside, love grew. I am who I am today because of God and a loving mother and father.

I know now that what I was told as a teen about being beautiful on the inside is worth so much more than being beautiful on the outside. If God is on the inside, our beauty will last for eternity. The outside beauty will fade with age.

Our home was small and not pretty as some but the inside beauty was breathtaking. With all the love inside, the inside force was stronger than the outside force.

The same is true with me. I still remember the name calling, the laughter and the fat girl jokes. I could have let the outside force win.

I had a loving mother and father and a happy, loving home life. I had a wonderful church family and precious Sunday School teachers. I had two older brothers and three older sisters and a few close friends but most of all I had love from Jesus Himself.

You see, my inside force is why I give my all now to spread His love to others. My simple life, my lessons learned—me telling it like it happened—may somehow help someone to grasp on to the inside force, to hang in there another year, another month or another day.

Let God be your inside force today. Life may not always be perfect. You will have sadness, trials and heartaches, but I can assure you He will never leave you.

So come a little closer—great things happen from the inside. Don't be so quick to judge things or people by the shell, package, building or the body.

Take time to come a little closer. Look on the inside.

Be the one who helps to make the inside beautiful for others. That is the beauty that never fades. God's love is our inside force!

Psalm 51:6

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

2 Corinthians 4:16

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

10 Beauty Secrets Every Girl Should Know

By Sharon Hawkins



1. Smile! A smile is the best makeup any girl can ever wear. It doesn't matter how much makeup you put on, it will never be enough if you're not wearing a smile.

A smile radiates warmth and welcomes connection with other people. It is the most beautiful curve on a woman's body. A smile is one of your greatest assets. If you're not using your smile, you're like someone who has a million dollars in the bank but no checkbook or debit card.

2. Be sweet! You may be pretty and you may be talented but nobody will remember that if you are mean. —Katie Holmes



3. Don't starve yourself! Every TV commercial says thin is in and implies that if you eat more than the bare minimum you are a failure.

That is a lie! A beautiful girl needs her nourishment to grow into a beautiful woman. Eating healthy foods in healthy quantities gives a girl a healthy glow you just can't get from a bottle.

To all the girls who think you are ugly because you are not a size 0. You're the beautiful one, it's society who is ugly. —Marilyn Monroe



4. Focus your eyes! Beauty is in the eye of the beholder—that's you.

For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others.* And look for the good in yourself. God does not make junk—not you and not other people.



The eyes are the window to the soul. Bless other people as you share your heart with them and look into their eyes with kindness while you yourself see what really matters—caring for others as Christ cares for you.



5. Tenderize your lips! For beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness.* Proverbs 15:1—A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless. —Mother Teresa

6. For poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone!*

What is poise? The dictionary says it is composure, calm self-assured dignity.



The Bible says that God will never leave you nor forsake you. A girl who walks with Him can walk in confidence and grace knowing if she trips and falls that she will be caught. With loving hands, He holds her steady.

*—Audrey Hepburn

7. Avoid being loud and proud! But *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of the Lord. 1 Peter 3:4

This is something that takes work. To beautify yourself with a quiet and gentle heart takes hard work, study and prayer. It is



an ongoing process, which we must work at carefully until it becomes a godly habit. It does not “just happen,” and it often means going against society around us.

8. Soften your hands! There are no more beautiful hands than those that are reaching out and helping those less fortunate.



Be the change you want to see in the world. With your hands do what you can to make a difference. When there is something you cannot do, put your hands together and pray and ask help from the One who can.

9. Go and share the hope of the message of Christ with others! How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims claims salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!” Isaiah 52:7

10 Beauty Secrets (Cont'd)

By Sharon Hawkins

For pretty feet, walk the paths less traveled. Be bold to share your faith with other people. Share what Christ has done in your life. Share the good



news that there is hope in Jesus Christ.

Why do the scriptures say that the feet of those who share the good news are beautiful? It is because there are so many people who are hurting and desperate and need to feel hope and love. They need the hope of good news, peace and salvation and to hear that God is big enough to help them with whatever problem they have, no matter how big it seems to them. When someone comes bringing that good news, it is a beautiful thing.

People see the beauty of those who care. God can use you to bring hope and share the good news that Jesus loves them and, that because He died for them, if they will confess their sins and ask Him to come into their hearts and save them, He will. He will change their lives and they can receive the ultimate hope and love through Him that will carry them through anything. And they can live forever in heaven with Jesus after they die.

What could be more beautiful than your sharing that wonderful news?

10. Listen with compassion! God gave us two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much



as we speak. Listening compassionately can be a valuable gift.

We all need to be heard. It's beautiful when someone cares enough about us to listen, to embrace our pain and let us share without judging us. Love is a vital link that connects us. Be that beautiful friend to someone today!

And remember the beauty found inside is really only the beauty of Christ living in us. He wants us to give it away!

Proverbs 31:30

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

By Brenda Horne



Facing the Giants...

If you are saved, then you are forgiven for your sins, right? So does that mean you can sin any way you want to and it's ok?

Yes, you are forgiven for your sins. No, I don't think you can sin anyway you want to because once you're saved, Jesus wants you to be more like Him.

Yes, you will be forgiven but when you are saved you don't want to do worldly things and sin. You want to live for God and even though you will be forgiven it is still wrong to sin.

Yes, I believe that when you accept Jesus He forgives your sins so that

you can be right with God and go to heaven. No, it does not mean you can sin anyway you want and it will be ok. God gives you grace but that does not mean you can go against everything else Jesus tells you. He takes sin seriously and expects you to try to live a life pleasing to Him.

Being saved is not a free ticket to sin as you want and get away with it. Once you are saved and Jesus Christ has entered into your heart, there is a radical change on the INSIDE. And with that change you should have a desire to RUN FROM SIN, NOT TO IT!!

You may need help fighting the lifestyle you are in at the moment—counseling, therapy, etc. But the Holy Spirit will help guide you AWAY

from that lifestyle and He will convict you if you try to return to it. Being saved is being forgiven of our sins and that alone should make us run from the hurt we know sin causes.

Romans 6:14-15, 17

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.



Grace In The Wilderness Ministries

139 Commons Way
Greenville, South Carolina 29611

Sharon Hawkins Phone: 864-380-2358
Email: sharon@wildernessgrace.org
Twitter: SharonYHawkins

Marie Pritchett Phone: 864-979-5281
Email: marie@wildernessgrace.org

FOCUS SCRIPTURE VERSE:

Isaiah 43:19

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

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

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

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

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

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

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*The future lies before you like a field of fallen snow;
Be careful how you tread it for every step will show —Unknown*

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Greenville, SC 29611