



Gracie's Way

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



The Green-Eyed Monster

By Sharon Hawkins

"But, Mom, Matt got to stay out until midnight when he was my age. Why do I have to be home by 11:00?," Gracie slung angry words at her mom.

"Because he had to take his date home first and he's a boy. You are not dating anyone. You're asking to go meet friends and drive yourself home late at night. The movie is over at 10:00. I worry about you. It's just not safe for a young girl to be out driving alone so late!," Mom countered.

"Oh great, the boy card again! Or should I say you're precious son card?," Gracie swallowed this thought to keep from saying it out loud. If she did, she knew it would mean she would not be going anywhere that night and she and her friends had been planning for a week to have this girls night out. Instead, she turned on her heel, stormed into her room and slammed the door until her windows rattled.

Yep, many times, just when Gracie, Today's Busy Teen, least expects it ... there it is ... creeping up on her and grabbing hold of her—that ugly green-eyed monster like no other—Jealousy!

Sometimes, it presents itself as sibling rivalry. Mom and Dad let Matt, her older brother, get by with more stuff and sometimes Dad spends more time with Toby her little brother than with her when they go camping or fishing. He never took HER camping or fishing. Wait, she hates camping

and fishing!, ... whatever ... it's the principle of the thing!

Sometimes the green-eyed monster goes to school with her. One day Gracie saw her BFF Carli talking and laughing with a new friend. The green-eyed jealousy monster took sweet little Gracie right over until she became green with envy. She pouted until Carli reassured her that she would always be her BFF and told her she would introduce her to her new friend.

In the past, she had had a relationship with Justin, the cutest boy in school. If ever any person could be possessed by the green-eyed monster it was Justin. One day a guy just touched her sleeve and he went ballistic. Justin might have been cute on the outside, but his insides were green-eyed monster all the way! Getting rid of him had been difficult but one of the smartest decisions she had made in her teenage life. Now Justin was off possessing some other poor girl.

With Justin, she learned what it feels like to be in the path of the monster, to be wrongly accused and judged. You'd think she wouldn't do that to someone else.

How can a girl fight this vicious green-eyed monster that so often creeps up when she's not looking?

She can start by asking herself a few questions:

Is my family member, significant other or friend trying to

hurt me? Have they given me a reason to be angry at them?

What is the worst thing that can happen if I ignore this green-eyed monster and say nothing?

Why do I feel this way?

Maybe Gracie doesn't really know why she feels this way. Possibly it could stem from feelings of insecurity in her relationships or inadequacy when comparing herself to others.

One way to defeat the green-eyed monster of jealousy is to communicate with our loved ones, explain our feelings, listen to their perspective and seek reassurance of our relationships if needed, like Gracie did with Carli. Except she should have left off the pouting part. After she met Carli's friend, Jenn soon became Gracie's new friend too. And after a discussion with her mom, she realized how blessed she was to have parents who loved her so much.

The next time the green-eyed monster creeps up, just smile at it and affirm your own positive qualities. Take your power back. You can't be hurt unless you allow yourself to be. Remember you are a princess, daughter of the King of the Universe. You are beautiful and you are fearfully and wonderfully made.

And tell that ugly monster to stick it in his ear ... :O!

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Special points of interest:

- Watch for our Grace In The Wilderness Teen Conference EMPOWERED JESUS GIRL in October, 2012.
- We're on Facebook. Become a fan of the Grace In The Wilderness Page. Look us up...



Psalm 139:14 NKJV
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.

The 2 Accidents That Changed My Life

By Ali Pritchett, 21

The sirens roared through the summer air. I sat in my parents' car praying harder than I have ever prayed. Just a few minutes earlier, I had received the most devastating phone call. My lifelong best friend, aka my brother, Josh, had been in a terrible car accident. No one had any idea what had happened or who had been involved. But there I sat with the glow of ambulance lights and complete madness going on around me. My parents had already rushed to the ambulance. I stayed behind because I didn't want to have to face the sight of my brother being hurt. From a distance I saw a fireman rushing towards me. He begged me, until I agreed, to go into the ambulance with my parents.

When I entered the ambulance I was expecting to see my brother lying there waiting to go to the hospital. To my surprise Josh was nowhere to be found and my mom and dad were hysterical. I was so confused. Why are they acting this way? What am I missing? A man that was beside us in the ambulance, who I later found out, was the coroner, shattered my heart into a million pieces with his words. He said, "Josh has already been taken to Dillard's."

I started screaming and wanted nothing else but to hold my sweet brother. I jumped out of the ambulance and wanted to keep running until I woke up from this tragic nightmare.

We pulled into our driveway and cars were parked everywhere. I ran straight to my brother's room and lay helpless on his floor. The one person who was always supposed to be there with me, no matter what, was taken away forever.

I heard the telephone ring and I thought who could that possibly be? My Dad with tears pouring down his cheek answered, the guy on the other line asked if my brother was there. My dad could hardly talk but told him that my brother was no longer here anymore. Hearing my Dad say that made me see that this was reality and not just a horrible nightmare.

We had to go to the funeral home. I was scared but I went anyway. We walked into the room where my brother was lying. My past and present were totally destroyed at that moment. Never in my whole entire life had I ever experienced something so painful. All that I can say is that without God, my family and I would have never made it through this tragic accident. My big brother died July 1, 2005 (a date I will never forget).

My mind had been blurred for two years and I had made horrible decisions. It was as if I had no conscience after July 1st. But thankfully God works in mysterious ways. May 4, 2007, I was in a serious four wheeling accident. Through all of the blood and tears I saw my life flash before my eyes. I had not been the Christian God had put me on this earth to be. Why did my life

have to end without getting a second chance to live my life to the fullest for God?? This question played over and over in my mind as I went in and out of consciousness.

I was completely helpless once again. I knew that without prayers May 4th would be my last night on this earth. In a matter of one hour I was told that there were so many people in the waiting room for me. And what were all of these people doing?? PRAYING!!! Needless to say God gave me my second chance and my miracle! The doctors said that there is no other way to explain how I survived other than God's will. The damage of my head injury was so horrific that the doctors said that out of 1000 people I'm the only one that survived this head injury!

Lucky??? No way! God has blessed me more than I could ever imagine and that is why my ALL goes to Him!!! He is amazing and I want to do my best for Him each and every day! Thank you so much Lord for saving my life and blessing me beyond measure!

Psalm 136:1 NKJV

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endures for ever."



Facing the Giants...

What do you do when your friends are not there for you? How do you feel about it?

You look for someone else to comfort you—whether it be God, your parents, even a boy. You feel alone stranded in the middle of the desert. Some people would know that God is always with them. But some people forget that God is always there for us when we need Him. Even when our other friends aren't, God is always with us even when we don't notice. Samantha 9th grade

When they aren't there for me I feel sad but I have wonderful Godly women I can go to for help and advice. Jenni 10th grade

It hurts my feelings but we have to lean on the Lord in times of trouble. Madison 11th grade

You hope that your friends are just busy. And it makes you feel like you need new friends. Rachel 7th grade

It is not very good when your friends are not there for you. You should look

to God to help you with your problem and He will put real friends in your life to help you. Brett 12th grade

The Teen Panel is absolutely correct. It does hurt our feelings when our friends are not there for us. And you have to wonder if Jesus knew how that felt since He was the son of God.

Picture this:

The most important event in all of human existence is about to happen. The "for real" weight of the world is on Jesus' shoulders and He asks His friends to do two simple things, watch and pray. So what happens?They fall asleep. And not only do they fall

By Brenda Horne

Facing the Giants (Cont'd)

By Brenda Horne

asleep once, but three times Jesus asks them to pray and all three times they fell asleep.

Yet Jesus knew his friends would fail Him. He knew the only place to find strength is in God. And that is true for us also! Our friends will fail but our friends are not where our strength comes from.

John 16:32 NIV

But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, For my Father is with Me.

Matthew 26:38-45 NIV

Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."



From A Guy's Perspective: Don't Be Like the World, Be Like Jesus

By Taylor Hawkins, 17

Ever heard the saying, "There are a lot of fish in the sea?" That's very true. There are so many "normal" people out there.

Guys aren't interested in clones. They don't want a girl that's just like everyone else. I'm sure you understand, when you start getting interested in a boy, there's a reason. There's something you see in him that makes him interesting. It's the same for guys. We see something in a girl that makes us want to know more about her.

Genuine Christian guys look for a girl that loves Jesus more than they could ever possibly love some guy. Every day, people

can tell how much you love Jesus through your actions. Whether its smiling to everyone you see, talking about your faith, not gossiping, or just not hanging out with who you know you shouldn't be hanging out with.

Just being who God wants you to be is all it takes to be different. Though you may not be considered as "cool" as you used to be, people will notice, and you will make a difference in their lives without even knowing it. A guy that is as in love with God as you are will take notice and will love you for it.

Romans 12:2 NIV says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,

but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." Don't be like the world. Be like Jesus. You shouldn't try to impress anyone but God.

When it all boils down, He's the only one that really matters. It just so happens that if you spend your life impressing God, you'll catch the attention of a boy that is also impressed.

1 John 2:15 NIV

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them."



From A Girl's Perspective: Don't Try to Act Different, Be Different

By Reid Long, 17

Being different in today's world shows that you're a girl with integrity. It shows that you don't care what anybody thinks. Being different is putting Jesus Christ first.

You'll know when you have Him first because your life will have order. I didn't say your life would be perfect, but your life will overflow with purpose. Things will start to come up in your life that you would have never imagined or even come close to having or experiencing.

Being different is not easy, but all things are possible through Christ and He will strengthen you. If you're really struggling to be different, then always check your priorities and see if they're straight.

Don't try to act different, be different. Let go and let God. He will empower you and make you stand out. God is so cool. If you just surrender everything to Him and give yourself away, He will use you to change the world.

Don't be skeptical about being different. Trust me, when you follow him wholeheartedly, a life filled with all of God's beautiful gifts will be guaranteed.

1 Chronicles 29:17 NIV

I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity.

Matthew 23:11 NIV

The greatest among you will be your servant.

The Good Ol' Days



Your grandmother says, "When I was a little girl, we did this....those were the good ol' days!" Do you roll your eyes and try to make an excuse to leave quickly or do you listen to the priceless gift that she is offering?

Our grandparents are our history and our future. Without them or the heritage from which they give, we have no idea where we came from or the history of our families. We are all busy and when we can't or won't make the time to spend with our grandparents or aging relatives, we are missing out on a precious gift that God has given us.

Our parents and grandparents are full of wonderful stories about our family and our heritage. They can teach us so much about who we are.

One day several years ago, my sister and I invited our grandparents for a day of "storytelling." They came and spent the entire day doing nothing but telling us stories about their childhoods and the events that surrounded them. Looking back I realize what a special day that was. We learned so many things about them and our family.



God's Little Miracle

Do you truly believe in the power of prayer? Do you believe in miracles? I believe that God has a purpose for everyone in this life, which could possibly sometimes include miracles. Life will never be perfect, but it will always be God's plan and he will take care of us no matter what tribulations we may face. I know this because of my favorite Bible verse. John 16:33 says: "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."

Mason Hawkins is the son of Chris and Kristen Hawkins. Mason was born on April 21st in Greer, South Carolina. Ever since the day he was born the doctors knew that he had at least one thing wrong with his heart. After months of tests and several visits to pediatricians and cardiolo-

gists, Mason's parents were told that he had some heart defects.

They were, of course, devastated and continuously wondered how efficient their son's life would be with these heart problems. What if he is not able to do the things in life that he enjoys? What if he is not able to experience the things that his brothers are able to experience? That could be very heart breaking for Mason and his family.

One of the greatest gifts from God is our family. Never take it for granted!!! You never know when it could be taken from you.

The following is a facebook post from a young woman who is spending her first Christmas without her grandmother.

"The only thing I dreaded about the holidays this year is spending my first EVERYTHING without my precious Boog.. my Birthday, which she always made special in so many ways, Thanksgiving when I helped her cook before anyone came over, and Christmas. At first I was mad ... mad at God for taking one of the most important people out of my life when I needed her most. But when I think back I realize how merciful and loving our God really is.

I remember sitting in the room with Boog as she was literally on her death bed, along with my mom and two of my aunts. I remember her dozing off for not even a minute to her jumping to wake herself up. When we asked her if she was okay she responded yeah but I guess they are coming for me already. When we asked who, she replied "HIS" people, emphasizing HIS. And then she asked us how come she wasn't in pain anymore. We asked her had she been in pain and she said yes but she was-

n't anymore and that she knew it was because God was taking care of her.

This was probably the most heartbreaking but comforting thing I'd ever heard. There's never a better time to get right with the Lord than now.

HUG and LOVE on your grandparents and family members this holiday season! NEVER take them for granted! "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Matthew 5:7". (Blair)

There is so much to be learned from Blair. She truly knew the importance of spending time with her grandmother and learning from her. The time we spend with aging parents or grandparents is never wasted but a true treasure. My grandparents have been gone for many years now but I still miss them and the time we spent together.

1 Peter 5:5 NIV

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

By Alexis Pritchett, 23

wreck and said several times how bad they just wanted to trade places with their sweet baby boy.

Instead of turning angry or resentful, they stayed positive and asked for prayers from everyone. For a couple of months, the defects stayed the same. The doctors told them they would just wait to see if these defects healed, stayed the same, or got worse. However, I remember the day that Kristen called to tell me the news.

Mason's parents had rather quickly found out that he would for sure need heart surgery very soon. I was at a loss for words when she told me. I honestly didn't know what to say or do for my best friend. I just kept reassuring her that God would take care of Mason, but deep down I was truthfully worried to death. All I could do was wonder what could really be God's plan for Mason.

God's Little Miracle (Cont'd)

By Alexis Pritchett, 23

The news that Mason definitely needed surgery, of course, caused much more tears and heartache for everyone involved. However, during this time of need people pulled through for this family in prayer.

Chris spoke with several people while working with the public. In each of these conversations, it ended with several promises of prayer for Mason. Mason was being put on numerous prayer lists and being prayed for by people that the Hawkins family did not even know. The family was told they would need to be ready for Mason's heart surgery on December 8th in Charleston. Mason has two brothers.

On December 6th, Mason and his parents headed to Charleston, South Carolina, for his surgery. The whole entire family left on December 7th for Charleston. The family waited anxiously for all the test results to come back on December 7th. Little did they know they would be awaiting a miracle sent straight from God.

When the doctors came in, they were not exactly sure how to explain that the heart defect that had needed surgery was now completely gone. They tried to come up with answers, but really just had no idea that God's will was just done in front of them with Mason. Praise the Lord, Baby Mason would no longer be going into surgery the next day! As you can imagine, the family was completely astonished. They knew that they were in the prayers of so many people. But they were just in awe of the fact that God had chosen their precious son to be a miracle that so many people could now be told about.

Mason has now touched the lives of so many people and will continue to touch lives throughout his own life as he grows. Their story is truly an amazing miracle that turned out to be a very special and early Christmas gift. The gifts that God gives are priceless!

The point of my story I have shared is to encourage you to believe in the power of

prayer. Sometimes life may not go exactly right and might seem to just be falling apart. It's not always going to go your way. However, the important thing to remember is that everything being done is in God's will.

It may not be on your time and it may not be how you want it, but God is doing His will. You have to have faith and know that he will take care of everything and remember that he can perform miracles. I want to challenge you to remember John 16:33, especially when you face tribulations in the world!

John 16:33 NKJV

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.



Share and Share Alike???

The youth group sat around the room staring at the two 12 oz., unopened bottles of water. The bottles were sitting on a small table in the middle of the room. The water was cold and inviting with condensation dripping down the sides.

When the youth leader entered the room, everyone immediately wanted to know why the water was there. He asked them to look at each one and tell him which water bottle they would drink from.

"Both bottles are unopened with cold, purified water," he said. The youth all agreed they would drink from either bottle.

With that said, the youth leader starts teaching and right in the middle of the lesson a man walks in, opens one water bottle and drinks a swallow. He then turns around and walks out. Immediately another man comes into the room and drinks from the same bottle and also walks out.

The youth are now curious, as another man enters, grabs the exact same water bottle and takes several big gulps. This

man however, has a mouth full of orange cheese crackers and as he drinks, the orange crumbs spew from his mouth into the water. The man sets the bottle back on the table and with orange teeth, he smiles at everyone and leaves the room.

By this time the youth are completely repulsed as they watch the orange chunks floating around in the bottle. Then yet another man quickly enters, picks up the cracker filled bottle and guzzles. You can hear the "yuuucks" all over the room. As he drinks, a piece of chewed, sticky gum slips out of his mouth and slides into the bottle. He stops and watches the gum float to the bottom. He then shrugs, sets the bottle back on the table and leaves.

The youth are now totally grossed out. With orange chunks, spit and chewed gum mixed together its almost too much to take.

Just then, another man enters, picks up the exact same bottle and starts chugging. They watch in horror as the gum slides down the bottle and straight into his mouth! He stops drinking the crumb filled water and chews the gum for a minute, then spits it back into the remaining or-

ange sludge. He chugs a little more and sets the remaining water back on the table. The youth sit in gross disbelief. "Eeww, that's nasty!!" is all they can manage to say, as he exits the room.

The youth minister then looks around the room and asks.....

"Ok, NOW which bottle would you drink from?" It was unanimous—the clean, unopened, pure bottle!

The youth leader continues, "You can tell by this illustration the importance of keeping your body pure and clean? Looking at these bottles you can literally see the damage that can be done to your body and how easy it is to become 'unclean'. You also heard the reaction of the group as the different men 'shared' the water. Once you have chosen to 'share' yourself with someone, it will not remain a private matter. Others will eventually find out and they will react to the impurity, just as you heard them react to the 'sharing' in this bottled water illustration. Keeping yourselves pure of sex, drugs and alcohol must be a priority in your life. It is that important!

By Brenda Horne

Share and Share Alike??? (Cont'd)

By Brenda Horne

The youth leader then gets every young person's attention. He makes them all sit straight up in their seats and look at him. He then states, "There is something else I need to tell you. Something I think young people are not understanding...."

A moral, non-smoking, non-drinking, no drugs, pure person can still go straight to hell. Being pure is awesome, but it means nothing without the Lord Jesus Christ."

The youth group listened carefully as he explained. "You must first start with a "pure" heart and that only comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ. You must first know Jesus ... *truly know your Savior* then you will have an honest desire to stay 'pure'.

Without Jesus, purity is just clean living. But *with* Jesus you will long for *true purity* in everything—your heart, your soul and your body. The desires of your heart change once you have a 'pure' relationship with Jesus."

The youth leader then prayed for salvation as well as purity for all the young people.

Purity can be a difficult road to stay on. Fleeing from sex, drugs and alcohol is never easy *for anyone*. That's why you must know Jesus first. Jesus is our line in the sand. He helps us know when and how to 'flee' from temptation. He also warns us of how easy it is to fail.

Satan is watching you and taking note of your every weakness. He is calmly waiting for the right moment to strike. And you can guarantee he will strike when the temptation is the strongest and you are at your weakest.

Satan will trip you up, watch you fall, then *laugh* in your face as your life shatters around you. Yet, Satan *cannot* enter the places where Jesus resides. When you choose Jesus and purity, you can boldly say, "Satan, back up off me, you don't know me like that!!"

But your Savior does '*know you like that*'.

He's knows your strongest desires, your darkest secrets, your deepest heart-aches. He also knows you want to love and to be loved. God has a plan for you, if only you are willing to follow that plan.

Being a pure Christian is not easy; God never said it would be, but its well worth the wait ... if only you will trust in Him.

1 Timothy 4:12 NIV

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

Galations 5:16 NKJV

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Best Friends are Forever

By Lexi O'Bryant, 16



In my 16 years of life I have learned that, just as quick as God puts people in your life, He takes them away. Not because

you don't deserve them or because you did something wrong but simply because He has a plan. Sometimes he gives you a best friend for a short period of time to impact your life or maybe so you can impact theirs. You see, last year on December third one of my best friends was killed.

This day was a Saturday and it was a rainy and very cold day. That morning I talked to my best friend Tabatha. She told me that she was going to the mall, she loved me and would talk to me later. Little did we know that would be the last time we would talk. My family always had a get together on the first Saturday of December so I went to that like I normally would. While I was there, I was sitting on the couch watching football with some of my cousins when I got a phone call from my friend Mallorie. I walked outside to talk to her for a few minutes and that is when she told me that our friend Tabatha

and three others had been in a car wreck. She told me that Tabatha had passed away.

Their car hit a puddle and hydroplaned, going into a ditch, then hitting a tree. Tabatha's neck was broken and she was instantly killed. The three others in the car--her brother was rushed to the hospital and was in a coma and the other two were bruised up.

When her brother came out of the coma he told us that he walked his sister to heaven and that is when he met God. He also told us that God gave him a second chance and that he should be dead. A few weeks later her brother came to church and got saved.

While Tabatha was alive she changed lives. She was always happy. She judged no one and had a smile for everyone. She was very positive and loved spreading God's word. Many people wanted to be like her and I don't blame them—many times I did too.

Tabatha and I talked every day. She gave me a hug anytime she saw me and would always tell me she loved me. If I ever

needed anything, I knew exactly who to go talk to. Tabatha was the kind of girl that if you needed someone to talk to she would listen. If you needed to cry, she was your shoulder. And if you needed reassurance, she had a verse.

Her favorite thing to tell people was "I'm a gardener for Christ. I plant the seed and He waters it, taking full control." This impacted many people's lives, including mine.

She is the perfect definition of a best friend. After Tabatha passed away, her name continued to change lives, friends were made and people were saved. I know I still have a best friend and God put her in my life for a reason and I am so thankful that I had the time with her that I did.

1 John 4:7 NIV

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.



Light My Path

By Amanda Seawright

When I was young, reading the Bible was more of a chore than a desire. I really didn't understand the significance—why it's important to read and study your Bible. The Bible is God's way of communicating with us—telling us how and why we should do things.

I would read the Bible and think why does that matter or how does that apply to me? I would get frustrated and close it and go on with life.

I felt empty and fearful of what was going to happen next in my life. It was like I

was walking around in the dark or blind. I couldn't see where I was going. I wanted to panic and run but didn't know where to run to.

I realize now that the Bible is our road map—our light in the dark. When we read it, and I mean really read it, we find comfort, direction and hope that the Lord will show us the way. We don't have to wander around in the dark lost and lonely. God is with us in all we do.

He is on every page of the Bible. We just have to search and find Him. Matthew 6:33 says, But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

If we are looking for God then as we read, we will find Him more and more.

*Father, Light my path so that I may know what direction you want me to go and that I might better serve you!
Amen*

Jeremiah 29:13 NKJV
And ye will seek me, and find me, when you search for me with all your heart.



Laughing Till Your Mascara Runs

By Sharon Hawkins

You gotta love the "Home Alone" movies, especially the first one!

Without fail, every year at Christmastime I just have to watch Home Alone 1 with my family. Every time, I laugh out loud until I cry. The "Three Stooges" style humor of Home Alone just cracks me up, no matter how many times I watch it.

There's no better therapy than a good laugh; no better medicine for what hurts us than a deep down, all-the-way-to-your-toes, nose-snorting giggle! Did you know that laughing actually increases circulation and improves the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to your body tissue? And, having a good belly laugh is like taking your heart on an internal jog. It's just outright good for you!

Have you ever been going through a sad, hard time on the verge of tears and, at the weirdest possible moment, you found something hilarious and you lost it, laughing uncontrollably? Boy, I have! It feels good doesn't it?

Laughter is the music of the heart. And just like music, laughter is a great gift from God to help us through hard times!

Remember that humor is not so much about a funny joke, but about how we view the world. Laughing at ourselves and

the situation helps us see that small things are not the earth-shaking events they sometimes seem to be. Laughter breaks the ice and allows us to be more objective and to have more insight.

I can't help but believe that God laughs too and He designed us to laugh. We were created in His image after all.

Look at nature, you have to admit God made some pretty funny looking creatures out there. What about the Blobfish or the Star-Nosed Mole? If you don't believe me, just check them out—W-E-I-R-D!

God's sense of humor is further confirmed to me as I 'admire' myself in the mirror when I first get up in the morning. How about you? *Hahahaha!*

And, how about those newborn babies? Can we admit that some might be just a little funny looking? Not in our families, of course, but other people's ... *lol!*

Laughter is an indicator of our joy level and Jesus is a great example to follow. He could hold the attention of thousands with His great storytelling. I'm sure His stories were laced with laughter.

In fact, Jesus came to live on earth that we might experience abundant joy. John 15:10-11 NIV says "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so

that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

Laughter builds bridges, takes down walls, encourages peace and forgiveness and helps us make new friends. Ever met someone new, strike up a conversation and soon you're giggling together? The giggles water and nourish the budding friendship, they help it to grow. Laughter is the same in every language. As Alan Alda put it: When people are laughing, they're generally not killing one another.

The next time life has you down, try looking for the lighter side of things. Find your bff and reflect on a funny memory, watch a funny movie together or just make goofy faces in the mirror. In no time, your frown will turn upside down and you'll find yourself laughing till your mascara runs. Glad tears are so much better than sad tears any old day, don't you think? :O)!!!

Proverbs 17:22 NKJV
A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones.



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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*Grace In The Wilderness Teen Conference
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Let my life song sing to You... —Casting Crowns

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