

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

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The Power of One

By Sharon Hawkins

There are lots of sayings about the number one, some not so positive. "There's one in every crowd!" "One is the loneliest number!" And, being "one of those people" is not always a good thing. The number one suggests seclusion, separation, maybe even being an outcast.

Grace Ankles, Today's Busy Woman, knows all about being "one of those people" and feeling like an outcast. And no matter how much she tries to fit in, even in a crowd, there are times when she can feel so lonely. But as a child of God, she shouldn't, because she is never alone. Deuteronomy 31:8 promises, "The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you, nor forsake you. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged."

Grace captures the attention of the Lord of the Universe, not because of who she is but because of Who He is. The power that draws Him to her is His great love for her. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Each "one" matters to the Lord! In Luke 15:4-7, Jesus told this parable, "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I

have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

In fact, Jesus the Great Shepherd loves us so much that He gave His life for us to give each one of us everlasting life in Heaven with Him. Talk about the "Power of One!"

In the Bible, there are many stories about God using just "one" person to change the world. He used one man, Noah, to save mankind from extinction. He used one man, Abraham, to become the "father of a nation". He used one woman, Esther, to save a nation. And He used one woman, Mary, to be the mother of Jesus.

Grace loves the Lord and she wants for Him to use her too. She sees that the world around her, the one she's trying to raise her children in, is changing and often not for the better. Everywhere she turns, it seems there is more violence, more evil, more sickness, more sadness, brokenness and heartache. She longs to make a difference in the world but how can she? After all she is just "one".

The good news is that's all it takes—just "one". Andrew Jackson once said, "One man with courage makes a majority."

Could it be that God is looking for just "one"? One willing to do something in the face of adversity? One with courage?

One to make a difference even if it's only to one other person?

The Starfish Story by Loren Easley is an example of the difference one person can make and the importance of helping just one. ...One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?"

The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die."

"Son," the man said, "Don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!"

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said, "I made a difference for that one."

Helen Keller once said, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do."

1 Corinthians 12:27 says, "You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." It's about being cherished and sought after and saved by Christ; and the power of each of us to go out and cherish and seek and let Christ use us to save others. Each of us might not be able to do it all but each one of us can do something! ... Oh, the Power of One!!!!

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*Watch for our
Grace In The
Wilderness
Conference for the
Mothers of Special
Needs Children—
Special Day for
Special Moms
coming to Mt. Airy
Baptist Church
on June 23, 2012*

John 17:23

*"In them, and thou in me,
that they may be made
perfect in one; and that
the world may know that
thou hast sent me, and
hast loved them, as thou
hast loved me."*



Financially Speaking: After Tax Time Tips

By Diana Kilgore

It's the end of April and that means one thing – we survived tax season!

Tax season officially ended for the majority on April 17th; however there are a few stragglers who filed for an extension and have until October 17th to get their numbers in order. As a taxpayer, you are in one of two categories: those who received a refund or those who had to pay. If you are among the former, I trust that you have properly handled your refund monies. If you are among the latter, I would like to offer a couple of ideas that may help you avoid owing next tax season.

First of all, check with your payroll department to make sure you are claiming the proper number of exemptions. If you are not, fill out a new form W-4 to make the changes as soon as possible. Remember that we are already ¼ of the way through this year, so you may need to overcorrect at this point by claiming one less exemption or having additional money withheld to insure a positive outcome next tax season. I will attempt to guide you through the process but recommend that you contact a tax professional if you are unsure in any area.

You will notice that the form W-4 has a worksheet at the top of it – ignore this as it can be very confusing. After filling in the basic name, address, and social security number information, you need to determine your filing status. If you

are not married, then put a check mark in front of the 'single' box (this includes people who file as Head of Household). If you are married and lived with your spouse all year long, then put a check mark in front of the "married" box. If you are married but lived apart from your spouse at any time during the year or your filing status is Married Filing Separate, put a check mark in front of the 'married but withhold at higher Single rate' box. Congratulations, you are making good progress.

Now comes the tricky part and the area where most people get into trouble- *exemption allowances*. It is actually quite simple; enter the number of dependents you will be claiming on your tax return. If you are single, you may claim either zero or '1'. If you are married, do not include yourself or your spouse in this number. For example, a married couple who lived together all year with their three children would enter a '3' in total number of allowances. If you file as Head of Household, count yourself and the number of dependents. For example, if you live with your three children, you would enter '4' in total number of allowances. I know many people who receive periodic bonuses like to bump up their exemption allowances to nine. Let me caution you in doing this for two reasons: 1) that bonus will be included in your taxable income and may create a tax liability if not taxed properly; and 2) many people forget to go back and lower the exemptions after the bonus has

been received, which creates a tax deficiency for the rest of the year until it's brought to your attention at tax time when you owe.

In addition to correcting your form W-4, I recommend that you set up a time with your tax professional to review your current income. Often times a taxpayer receives a raise which may bump them into a higher tax bracket, thus lowering their refund or creating a balance. Call your preparer and ask if you can drop by with your last paycheck stub to see how things are playing out for your 2012 taxes. If you take time to do that now, it may save you headaches later.

Finally, any time you have an increase in income, whether through IRA distributions, financial settlements or raises, please call your tax professional to insure you have the correct amount of taxes withdrawn at the time of disbursement.

I realize that "tax talk" can sometimes be boring, but I hope you have found some helpful information here.

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.



Titus 2 Wisdom for Women: The High Calling of Motherhood From Conception to Empty Nest and Beyond

By Cathy C. Whisnant

Mother's Day is here and I am beginning a series of articles for all of you precious mothers and grandmothers.

If you go back in history, our forefathers understood the role a mother plays in her children's lives. Abraham Lincoln stated, "All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel Mother." It was President Wilson that signed a resolution making Mother's Day an official holiday in 1914. This resolution pro-

claims mothers as the greatest source of our country's strength and inspiration.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "No other success in life; not being president or being wealthy or going to college or writing a book or anything else comes up to the success of the man or woman who can feel they have done their duty and their children rise up and call them blessed."

Ephesians 4:1 tells us, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." So if God has chosen you as a mother, don't stoop to be a queen! I have

found that the joys of being a mother and grandmother are the rarest treasures we will ever receive. But they are treasures we can easily miss if we do not seize every opportunity God gives us with them. President Wilson may have proclaimed the day, but it is God who created the Mother!

As I write this article, I get a little teary eyed as I think back to when my boys were young. I think of all the joy they gave me; yes, even when they became teenage aliens I didn't recognize for a few years. There is so much to



The High Calling of Motherhood (Cont'd)

By Cathy C. Whisnant

learn from the conception of our children to the empty nest, and beyond to where many of us now live. We will take a look at the seeds we must plant in the hearts and lives of our children from the time they are born so that they may grow up to be great men and women who will help lead this nation back to God. But before we start our seed planting, I would like to have a heart-to-heart talk with you about this thing called motherhood.

What does God's Word say about this subject? In the 127th Psalm, we read that children are a heritage from the Lord and happy are those who have their quiver full. Now, I wasn't sure what a quiver was, so I had to do a little research. A quiver is a case that carries arrows for your bow. Some of these cases hold two arrows, some eight, and some fifteen. That really helps you, doesn't it? How do you find out if your quiver is full? I can tell you ahead of time that my quiver was not full when my husband and I decided we would

only have two children. It is a decision I will regret for the rest of my life. So to make sure your quiver is full, you and your husband must make it a matter of prayer and make sure you are listening to His voice and not the voice of the world who thinks you are only a responsible parent with no more than three children. Have you ever noticed how most families with five or more children are so happy? I sincerely hope you will make this life-changing decision a matter of prayer.

Family units are certainly not what they used to be, but it is not God's principles that have changed. His Word contains healthy guidelines for healthy families. I hope that as we talk about this subject, we can put His practices into play in our homes. I pray that we will allow God to reign in His rightful place as the Master Designer of the home and the family. Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the home, its builders labor in vain..." A family without God can never experience all that God meant for them to be. Don't

make the mistake of leaving Him on the back burner while all other activities take priority. He wrote the original blueprint and we must allow Him to build in us the values He wants passed down from generation to generation.

From the time our children are born until the day they fly the coop, we must first and foremost be their mother who loves them unconditionally, teach them about God and His ways, teach them morals and values, and teach them to one day be able to stand on their own. God loaned us these children for a short time to train them up to be adults in a dying world where salvation must be taught.

Motherhood and being a nana are the closest things to my heart. Grab your children and hug them tight...one day all too soon, they will have families of their own and you will stand back and watch the awesome things God has done in their lives. Keep trusting God as the designer of the home and dig into His blueprint for a healthy and happy family.



His Way or No Way for My Family!

By Katrina Trotter

My desire is to follow God's plan for my family to the "T" even though His plan rarely makes sense to my feeble mind. Let me explain with an example that "rocked my world". This story is just one of many where I can see God's mighty hand guiding my family through a valley and back to the mountain top.

My husband Dwayne has been in the army for 26 years and is just 8 months from retirement. 4 years ago he went to the doctor with a bad cold and expected to leave with a Z pack but instead left with a cardiologist appointment and lots of questions. Dwayne had a heart murmur and needed further tests. We were not too alarmed—lots of people have murmurs, right? Little did we know we were about to embark on a new chapter of our lives that would leave us with a lot of uncertainty and lots of doctor appointments.

Dwayne went to his first cardiologist appointment and was informed that he had a leaking valve and eventually it would have to be repaired. Of course, Dwayne's first question was, "How?" Surgery and not just any surgery--open heart surgery! I couldn't believe it. "NO!", was my thought. He was just too young. Besides, my mom had just 2 years

previously had open heart surgery, I had an uncle die during open heart surgery. I knew how serious this was. SO...being the smart person I am...I ignored it. Funny how we can just deny things sometimes, not even pray about it because that would be acknowledging it. Well, even when we don't want to admit fear and pain, God knows it's there and he knows why and how he is going to use it for HIS glory!

In my bliss of denial, my family rocked on through more valleys and mountaintops for the next four years with God's undeniable hand guiding us through it all. My reflection over those 4 years bring so many blessings to mind, like a new church family, our little girl Ava Grace and a new home ... Oh, so many stories I could tell but I digress! Dwayne was doing great, a little tired and short of breath, but doing great. I mean those things come with being 40, right?

Dwayne's retirement was getting closer but we had another military hurdle to get over—Afghanistan and another year at war. Once again I felt my peace slipping away as the waves were threatening to take us under. Every time I go into a valley I get amnesia and forget who

just brought me through the last one. That has to disappoint my Father.

With deployment right around the corner there were lots of doctor appointments including a trip back to the cardiologist.

This time I went with him because I was prepared to convince his doctor that Dwayne did not need to go to Afghanistan. (I hope that does not offend anyone. In my mind Dwayne had served his country well.) So Dwayne and I traipsed off to the cardiologist and I was ready to fix it all and set the army straight. See what I mean? I had forgotten who was in control of my family! (Sometimes I think it's me!!)

The doctor said, "The leak is a little worse but no need for surgery yet but you do not need to go to Afghanistan." Whew...kind of what I wanted to hear, I guess.

Dwayne presented this information to his higher ranking officials and the doctor sent the required letter. The army bounced it around for several weeks and came back to Dwayne with this response, "SGT., we are going to leave it up to you." I was shocked. I wanted to scream, "NO!" This is not up to him. I know Dwayne too

well and I knew the conversation we were about to have about “duty” and “commitment”...so I helped him pack and we both tried to be strong for our 3 children.

We still had several months to prepare and did so by reminding ourselves of all the things God had brought us through in the past. Then Satan threw us a curve ball. One thing that was a little exciting through all this was the possibility that Dwayne would be promoted to SGT. Major once he deployed. This gets a little confusing but Dwayne’s Chief in the army wanted his father who was a SGT. Major in a different unit to deploy with him. The army allowed this. So, the Chief’s father took the SGT. Major slot that would have allowed Dwayne to be promoted. Let’s just say Dwayne and I were a little miffed! I keep forgetting who is in control!

In February 2011 the 228th Signal Brigade Headquarters deployed to Afghanistan and Dwayne with them. The boys and I had been through it before and we were prepared but our little Ava was a different story. Who am I kidding? There is nothing easy about living a year without your spouse or father! Well, it wasn’t easy on Dwayne’s mom and dad either. Dwayne’s dad was worried sick about his youngest son and his mom, I believe, just gave up on life. On Mother’s Day Dwayne’s mom who has poor health anyway laid down and wouldn’t get up. She quit eating and was rapidly going down hill. Three months after Dwayne deployed I had to send him a Red Cross message that hospice did not know how long his mom would be with us. Dwayne needed to come home.

Dwayne went to his superiors, told them his mom was dying, his dad was 80 and his family needed him. He told them, “I don’t think I was ever supposed to be

here anyway and when I go home I do not want to come back.” Brace yourself because you may not believe what I am about to say! The army said, “Go home soldier and take care of your family.” This is not a typical army statement but you have to understand God has a plan and he is not only in control of my family but he is also in control of the US Army.

So, I have no doubt that God wanted Dwayne home and He mastered the whole scene. Remember the Master SGT. that we were like, “Why is he going to take Dwayne’s slot?” I mean we had it all planned out and this man was messing up “our plan.” Well, this man was trained in Dwayne’s job and could step right into his shoes SO... Dwayne could come home. WOW!! I liked God’s plan!

So, Dwayne came home and to top it all off his mom rallied for awhile and got to enjoy some time with her family. I have to say you know it is not just Dwayne and me that God is blessing. It is also a godly mother! She is still under hospice care but she is being taken care of by her husband who has adored her for many years and children that love her, oh, what a blessing!

So again my family was intact and we rocked on for several months until out of the blue Dwayne decided to go see his cardiologist. Here we go again! Dwayne’s leaking valve had worsened and he was scheduled for a procedure for the following week to determine it’s severity. After the procedure was over, the doctor came out to talk to me and Preacher Stuart. The news was worse than I expected. Dwayne’s leak was considered severe and we needed to speak to a surgeon—an open-heart surgeon. Dwayne was brave but anybody can be brave when they are doped up. I am the one that needed the meds at this point but they wouldn’t give me any! The sur-

geon explained that Dwayne’s heart had to be fixed and soon. His heart in the past year had grown 3 cm and his little valve door “hinge” (that’s what I call it) had torn off. If he kept going eventually his heart would give up and Dwayne would die.

See why he was not supposed to be in Afghanistan? So, the surgeon explained that he hoped to be able to repair Dwayne’s valve and if he could not, he would replace it with a cow’s valve... MOOO!! The kids and I could have had some fun with that, “Like Dad can I have some MOOoney?” or “Hey hon, MOOOve over!” Instead we decided to ask our family and church family to pray for the repair ...and once again people were praying for the Trotter family. I will never be able to thank them enough because Prayer works!

Surgery day finally arrived. Dwayne and I were as calm as could be! God is good that way! The kids and I kissed Dwayne and said we would see him when he woke up. Then they wheeled him away. Five hours later Dwayne was in CCU recovering from an extensive open-heart valve repair! So no cow jokes...haha. Today Dwayne is feeling wonderful and his recovery has been amazing! Dwayne has even shocked the doctors at how well he has recovered. Why are doctors always so shocked? I mean our GOD Doesn’t PLAY! When you are a child of His, He makes a plan and sticks to it no matter how many times we get in the way!

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

By Cathy McCormick

Grief: No Expiration Date



Denial, “I Wasn’t Expecting You!”

What do dreams tell us? I’ve al-

ways believed that dreams are a window into our subconscious ... revealing things that we don’t want to think about or that we have yet to resolve. Our challenge is

to figure out what the seemingly mismatched puzzle pieces mean.

I have been in Florida for about 3 weeks now -- obviously I’ve lost track of time. This has not been the pleasure trip I had planned months ago as my sweet Aunt Patti has been diagnosed with brain cancer and I came to Florida early to spend some quality time with her and help her.

I am going to leave that story for another time, as a more compelling thought is now dominating my consciousness.

So, without going into details about my time in Venice, FL with my aunt, I am now in Casey Cay, FL—one barrier island north of my aunt’s home in Venice.

My cousin, Robin, and her husband, Paul, rented this darling Sears kit house



Grief: No Expiration Date (Cont'd)

By Cathy McCormick

on an incredible piece of property that runs from Little Sarasota Bay in the backyard to the Gulf of Mexico in the front yard. Unlike Venice, it is quiet—no neighbors or friends bustling around, and the wildlife is abundant.

In the backyard (Little Sarasota Bay and the Intercoastal Waterway) are two docks where I can sit in the shade of the mangroves and watch herons, egrets, and other birds and fish unknown to me, quietly go about their daily chores. The front yard is an uninterrupted view of the turquoise waters of the Gulf and the horizon, with dolphins breaking water a few feet off the beach. I've come here, to Casey Cay, to recharge and restore after 3 very hectic weeks helping my aunt and hosting up to 20 relatives at a time.

Thanks to Cousin Robin, I am experiencing the beach that Anne Morrow Lindberg talks about in *A Gift From The Sea*—right down to the simple little house. I feel so, so blessed! I have been here for two nights. And it is the dream that I had last night that has prompted me to open up the ole' laptop (there is no WiFi here) and write down this dream in hopes of understanding it and of giving it the attention I believe it deserves. I welcome all feedback as it is yet another piece of the grief journey that has surprised me.

Last night I had a long, long dream that my sweet husband was alive. I think it may have started where he was alive

and healthy, but I can't be sure of that. What I do remember—the part of the dream that even coming half awake would not stop—was that he was sick and I was trying to get him to the hospital. In the dream we were driving somewhere—the place is hard to pin down as during the dream we were in many towns and cities. I find it is impossible to write the story of a dream as when you start to write it you realize how disjointed and illogical it is/was. So, rather than try to recapture the one trillion nuances of the dream, I will boil it down to a few sentences.

The gist of the dream was that I thought Len was alive and we were sharing a normal day. Then he got ill and while the doctors were trying to figure out what was wrong with him I realized that he had died a year earlier. I didn't say anything to the doctors as I thought they would think I was crazy. But eventually, I had to tell them --- we were all amazed. What I remember most about Len during this dream is an incredible restlessness—his pacing and confusion, a child-like attitude. When I told the doctors that he had died a year ago they were as amazed as I was—they didn't laugh, they didn't say "hey lady, you are dreaming." They were just as amazed and curious. All of my costars in the dream were helping me deny the fact that Len was dead and that this was a dream.

Or, was it more than a dream? Was it yet another step in the process of grief?

Denial—one of the many steps of grief. Steps that take NO LOGICAL sequence. And, I guess I'm learning, that you will experience each of these steps or phases and that there is no expiration date—you will experience them. During this last year I have never felt a sense of denial in Len's passing—it was real, I accepted it, I celebrated it, but I never denied it.

Well, this morning, in the beautiful peace of this sweet, little house on Casey Cay, I think I finally experienced denial. I cried. I pleaded. I moaned. I groaned. I begged God to bring Len back to me. I cried and clung to Len begging him not to leave me. I felt a profound grief that I haven't felt in many, many months.

The ONLY sense I can make of this dream here in the early daylight of the beach is that I have now firmly stood on the step of denial and I will honor it today knowing that my God is healing me and moving me along. I hold on to the truth that God uses change to change us. He doesn't do it to destroy us but to coax us to the next level of character, experience, compassion, and destiny.

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.



The Lemon

When I first started my business in 1996, I sold my 1993 Chevrolet Blazer and bought what I thought was a good, used 1989 Aerostar Van. The theory was to get rid of my car payment until the business could support me with a decent paycheck. That was the plan anyway—it didn't work out so well. I think I could have paid a \$500 car payment for all the money I had to sink into my lemon to keep it running.

One day as I raced to Spartanburg for a meeting with a potential client, my lemon started jerking enough to make lemonade. Soon there was a clanking sound followed by a loud "pop" as a part dislodged and fell off into the road. The van plopped down right in the middle of

an intersection on Highway 29. I had left my cell phone at home so I had to walk to the Little Cricket Convenience Store to call AAA to have my car towed.

As I stood there on the pay phone, I watched a guy slow down behind my van in a little old blue Ford Pinto. He opened his door and looked around as he hovered his arm over my part that had fallen off on the highway. I yelled, "Hey, that's my part!" Then I'll never forget it ... He looked up at me, grabbed the part, pulled it into his little car and sped away. "Ok, wow, really?!?!" I thought.

After we got my car repaired, my husband Scott and I were discussing the part which cost around \$150. He told me

that there was no way the part would have fit the guy's car. We figured he probably hung it on a nail in his barn or shed just to collect and have. I have to admit that I prayed more than once for that part to fall off that nail and hit that guy on the head. Wonder if it still is hanging there sixteen years later? I bet it's rusty by now.

Sometimes even our best laid plans fail, but God is still always faithful! Prov 16:9 says, In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps. I'm so glad He's got me covered! He blessed my business and before long, I was able to buy another used car and, Praise God, it wasn't a lemon :O)!

By Sharon Hawkins



Shut Your Mouth

By Marie Pritchett

I can't begin to count the number of times I have said, "Lord, today I want my words to be your words. Please help me to say only positive, uplifting things. Help my words to be pleasing to you". Then what happens? The kids won't get up even though they have to be out the door in 5 minutes. The blow dryer stops working as you try to dry your hair. You burn the kids' waffles. And when you finally get in the car, you realize you forgot to get gas the night before and there is no way you can make it to school without stopping. After a morning like this, your child starts crying and refuses to get out of the car. By this time, my words are anything BUT sweet and uplifting.

We are all familiar with James' "Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger." But I think most of us struggle with all of these at one time or another.

As Christians, our words are to be a "fountain of life" able to "feed many". They are "choice silver". (Prov. 10:11, 20-21) Ugh, just reading this makes me reflect on all the times I have let my mouth get me into trouble! Far too often we are too quick to speak and too slow to listen.

The days of thoughtful correspondence are long gone. Now it's immediate com-

munication where we easily "fire off" an e-mail, "facebook" or "tweet" thoughts before we have sufficient time to think through our own words, much less try to understand the words of another.

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions. (Proverbs 18:2) He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame. (Proverbs 18:13)

I'm not suggesting that we never discuss tough issues, or speak hard words. There are times when it is necessary but we must learn to distinguish between truth and error. Many of us would be better off to shut our mouths before opening them. Unfortunately, once a word is spoken it can never be taken back.

In the multitude of words there wants no sin: but he who refrains his lips is wise. (Proverbs 10:19) This means we must think about our words before letting them leave our mouths. Oh me!!! *Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (Proverbs 29:20)*

The Bible tells us to speak of good things and if we can't then we are to not speak at all. *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that*

you may know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:6)

Our mouths were created to praise and worship the Lord. Every part of our being was created to glorify God here on earth. One of the ways to stay filled with the Spirit is to use our mouths to praise, sing spiritual songs, and to give thanks to God. If we are busy praising and worshipping the Lord, we will not have time to give into our own lusts such as gossip or tearing others down.

Another way we can stay filled with the Spirit is to refuse to allow anything to come out of our mouths that would discourage or hurt others. Our mouths were created to praise God and also to praise and edify others. In the Bible, David knew he was weak when it came to his mouth, and he called out for God's help. David's prayer is one that could benefit each of us.. "Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Your sight. Set a watch over my mouth, and may my mouth be used today only to praise You and to edify and praise others."

Let today be a new beginning. Let's use our mouths to bring honor and glory to God and to others.



Garden In The Wilderness: Caroline

By Robin Steckley

February 10, 2011—it was the final day of a 3-week trip visiting CBM projects in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. The trip had been inspiring but on this particular day, my mind and heart were looking forward to home—to seeing my husband and two children.

There was one final project to visit before we began our journey home, Sabatia Eye Hospital. This is a project CBM has funded. We wanted to be able to give a firsthand report to donors on the results of the 1st year of this 3-year project.

The results were impressive. There have been challenges in 2010 but the project is on target. Their staff is hardworking, committed and happy. I was satisfied and could have come home at this point and reported to donors that their gifts were producing good results—the kind of results CBM looks for in our projects. But if we had left after the business

meeting and reviewing the outcomes, I would not have had the privilege of meeting Caroline AwoorOoko.

I met Caroline resting in the ladies ward with her two children ages 4 years and 7 months. Caroline's case was both urgent and serious and Sabatia Hospital understands the burdens and the hearts of young moms like Caroline.

You see Caroline had bilateral cataracts and had been completely blind for 3 years. She had never even seen her 7 month old son. She told me she would ask her sister and her friends "is my little boy healthy?" And they would describe his tiny face to her and assure her he was healthy and content. As I looked at her little boy I was overwhelmed with Caroline's courage raising two children alone, in the dark. Last August, just after their little boy was born, her husband packed Caroline, the children and their few belongings and sent her to live with her sister. She was useless he told

her. "You cannot clean, or cook or care for the children." She has not heard from him since. My heart ached for her as I thought about my husband and children and their eagerly wanting me home.

God is so very good though, for a man started in the training program at Sabatia Eye Hospital in August, about the same time Caroline's husband abandoned her. He graduated November 29, 2010, and immediately began to put his new skills to work. Since his graduation, Elishia has referred 300 clients to Sabatia including Caroline.

January 29th Elishia spoke at Caroline's church explaining the eye care program and sharing the date, February 5th, for the assessment clinic he would be holding. Caroline came with no money and no husband to support her, just her children and her faith. She told me she believed that God could heal her through Sabatia Hospital.



Caroline (Cont'd)

By Robin Steckley

gathered enough money for the bus trip to Sabatia and arrived on February 7. Her first cataract was removed February 8 and the second one on February 9.

When I met her, Caroline could see her little boy and her daughter. I asked what she was thinking. She responded with joyous laughter "I am imagining what people are going to say when they realize I can see! God has done miracles for me!"

We talked about being a mom and she said "the children are watching me so closely. They know something has changed with me." As I watched her with her children, I was reminded how much I was anticipating going home and seeing my children. And I hoped she knew how

important a mother is in the life a child. How important she is in the lives of her children. I think she did. I was grateful that God gave me the privilege of watching her preparing herself and her children to leave the hospital. She no longer needed assistance to do the simple tasks we moms love to do for our children.

I did ask about her husband. Caroline is going to call him with the news that she can see when she gets home. She does not know if he will return her call or if he will take his family back. My heart broke for her. My husband cares for me and for my children so deeply. I don't understand this culture but I accept that my God does. I also know that He knows what is best for Caroline. So I prayed for her as she left the hospital literally skip-

ping with joy. I prayed that God would continue to guide her and her little family, that he would protect her and continue to do miraculous things in her life and the lives of her children.

I also prayed for another young mom sitting quietly with her baby girl on her lap. She too has bilateral cataracts and her surgery was to be one of 50 surgeries today. I thought to myself. "tomorrow as I fly home she will see her little girl for the very first time. Another miracle!"

Robin is with CBM, an international Christian development organization, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in low income regions of the world. Visit cbm.org for more information.



Pigs In a Blanket

By Michele Nigliazzo

We were told at the 5-month ultrasound that the baby girl I was carrying would die at birth. We were blessed to carry her to term, all the while preparing for her funeral. Our sweet Callie, born on March 28, 2002, lived 8 minutes after birth, but we had enjoyed months of getting to know her beautiful, courageous spirit while I carried her. Holding her was a privilege.

The support in our community was amazing. It seemed that daily people let us know they were praying for us. Friends and family came and did laundry repeatedly. Meals were brought in—even when we felt too much grief to eat. I remember my mortification when my dear friend brought some of her homemade soup which I, in grief, did not eat. She then came a week later to help me clean house, and cleaned out her own beautiful soup with a smile and without even saying a word.

It was miraculous love from special friends that made things bearable, particularly when we had no more to give. I will always remember one particular day when I was sick and had to go to the store. My 2 boys, both under 4 years old, were also not feeling well. I was carrying a child who was dying. One of my little boys kept saying, "Mom, I just want pigs in a blanket" (hot dogs wrapped in biscuits). In my rush to get in and out of the store quickly, I forgot the key ingredients of pigs in a blanket. When we got home,

my young son began to cry over the misfortune. I felt so small. This was the straw that broke this camel's back. I was tired and overwhelmed. I had nothing left to give. I knew my son would survive a meal without pigs in a blanket, but I couldn't handle the weight of it all anymore. I felt alone.

A few hours later, the doorbell rang. The church had set up a schedule of meals to come in and there was no one scheduled for this night, so we weren't expecting company. When I opened the door, an elderly couple serving a mission in our area was there and brought us dinner. The sister handed me a platter and said, "I made you some lasagna." Then, her husband passed another foil covered bowl to my sons and said, "These are for you." When the kids eagerly asked what it was that was for them, he replied, "Pigs in a Blanket."

I about fell to my knees. How could they have ever known? NO ONE had ever brought us pigs in a blanket before. Not until this day, the day when I had had too much. Where I was not enough.

Those pigs in a blanket were manna that night, especially since this loving elderly couple had lost a child of their own many years earlier. They had felt a tender prompting of the spirit to come that night and bring something only God Himself could know we needed.

I share this small miracle because I want you to know you do not need to know WHAT to do to help someone else. God

knows what is needed, and if you will follow those promptings (no matter how silly they may seem), He can and will direct you to the needs of families you love.

Pigs in a blanket did not change the fact my daughter would die, but they did change my perspective and gave me knowledge that I was definitely not alone. We cannot "fix" every problem, but we can always show we care. In small, yet important ways, our acts of kindness will be perfect for those we love because our Father in Heaven knows what we do not, understands what we cannot, and sees what we may never see. In His perfect love, He uses angels, like this elderly couple and the many friends and family members who prayed for us, to show us that He was always with us. We were never alone.

Michele is an attorney and mom who recently started an advocacy center for families helping kids with attachment disorder: Nigliazzo Advocacy Center.





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. 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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Conference for the
Mothers of Special
Needs Children—
Special Day for
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coming to Mt. Airy
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on June 23, 2012*

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*When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off.
You sit still and trust the engineer. —Corrie Ten Boom*

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