

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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Simply The Best

By Sharon Hawkins

It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. It was the best for me, the worst for Him. It was the day that Jesus laid down His life to save me from my sins.

This was because He saw something that He alone could see in me—my very best. He saw something that was not there and only God can do that. And to Him, it was worth dying for. What unfathomable love!

Romans 5:8 says, But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since God gave His best for me, isn't the least that I can do to give my best for Him?

But what is my best? If I could be smarter and work harder, would that be my best? If I could earn more and give more, would that be my best? If I could solve all the problems in the world, stop the wars, and cure cancer, would that be my best? *By the way, I hate cancer. I wish it would get cancer and die.*

If I could serve others more and make things just right for everyone, would that be my best?

Martha thought so. She had welcomed Jesus and His disciples into her house and was busy making things perfect for them. In Luke 10, we find that she was very upset that she was having to do all the work by herself, while her sister Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening to what He had to say.

Like Martha, I want to make things perfect for others. But in case you have not noticed, I am not God so I cannot really do that.

When I give myself, well, it is just me that I am giving. And I hate to admit this but, to make matters worse, sometimes I whine about it being too hard.

Martha complained to Jesus too and here was His response.

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (vs. 41-42)

Mary had found the secret. She knew she had to look to Jesus. Her best could only be found in Him. It is all about Jesus. Jesus is love.

In Matthew 22:38-39, Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

So giving Him our best is simple really. It starts with loving Him and spreads to loving everyone else.

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of

prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

While we try to show our best and love in all situations, sometimes life gets the best of us, doesn't it?

Here are 7 Tips to help us give our best to God and to others.

1. Pray and ask God for ideas of how to show your love to Him and to the world. Then align your attitude, decisions and actions with that.
2. Surround yourself with those who challenge and/or encourage your efforts to love God and love people.
3. Focus on how what you do benefits others and how God feels about it.
4. Put yourself in the shoes of others and treat them as you would want to be treated.
5. Commit to kindness.
6. Count your blessings. Be thankful. Be thankful. Be thankful.
7. LOVE

No matter how much we give, we can never outgive God. No matter how much we love, we can never outlove God. That is because He cared enough to send the very best.

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1 Corinthians 13:13

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Putting Jesus First

By Brian McNeely



I have been married to Debbie McNeely since June 11, 2005, and I have a daughter, Annie, a son, Drew, a son, Tyler, and a daughter, Crystal, married to Brian Thornberg. My grandson, Brody Thornberg, was born in 2012.

My parents are Jack and Jeanette McNeely. My older sister, Beth is married to Tony Bray. My older brother, Steve, is married to Judy. My younger sister, Jami, is married to Rob Crisman. Many nieces and nephews also comprise my family.

First of all, I want to personally thank all of my family for showing me Christ's love all of my years of active addiction. It's totally about Christ in my life today. If it had not been for His saving grace, I would not be here today. The Lord Jesus Christ has been longsuffering and patient with me. I love Jesus!!

I was born June 2, 1960 in Greenville, South Carolina. I had a normal childhood, and my parents and brother and sisters and I attended church regularly. Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night, we were always there.

Never, and I mean never, was I around alcohol while growing up. Never in my home, never in any of the places our family went. No one in my family has ever drunk any alcoholic beverages before, only me. Growing up, I heard stories about extended members of the family maybe having difficulties with alcohol, but I thought to myself—never any of us. It just was not part of our lifestyle.

At the age of 14, I can remember being somewhere with friends, and one of the friends' family members had a beer, and I thought, "What a terrible thing!" And the remark was simply, "Oh, he does that all of the time." I thought to myself, right then, that, if that's the case, I don't want to ever touch that stuff.

Boy, what a difference three years makes in a person's life. I was a football player in high school who was recruited to many of the area schools to play ma-

ior college football. Upon visiting some of those schools, what you might call the recruitment process went on, and I got the taste of alcohol. Now, to be honest, I had tried it before, in high school, in a different environment, but trying it for the first time at a club just added a little luster to the taste. I'm satisfied I became addicted from that very first taste. I awakened a sleeping giant in my life. I believe alcohol is a drug that leads to other drugs and beyond. It led me down a road that became more dangerous by the day.

My life had been pretty sheltered up until this point in time. After this point, my life began spiraling down for a period of 25 years.

My first negative experience related to alcohol and drugs was in 1982, when I wrecked one night on my way home from a club. I had cocaine in my possession and got a DUI, also, I totaled my car and had to go to alcohol and drug safety action program (ADSAP) classes.

In 1983, a year and a half later, on my way home from a club, I passed out at the wheel and ran into a church sign off Sulphur Springs Road. I totaled my car and leveled the church sign. I broke both of my legs and cracked some ribs and had to have plastic surgery to repair an eyelid. The horn button came off and the prongs cut my eyelid off on my left eye.

In 1986, I had kidney problems and had three-fourths of my kidney removed. I had a cyst the size of a grapefruit and had many difficult days of pain medication and alcohol during these days. I went on summer vacation with my family to Panama City, Florida for a week, and every chance I got, I would sneak to have a beer. It was the first time I can remember not being able to go a week without it.

The last week of January in 1990, I had a pancreatic attack. I had intense pain in my stomach, so much pain, unbearable. I found myself in the hospital with IV's in both hands.

The first 24 hours, I thought I'd rather die than endure the intense pain any longer. That first night in the hospital, my younger sister stayed with me. I got worse as the night went on, until finally they moved me to ICU, and the next two

days my life was touch and go. My family was told that I might not live. The Lord was taking care of me even before I was a Christian.

Let me go back a minute. I was raised in church. I heard the Bible stories as a child and always listened. At the age of 15, while at church camp, I got saved (I thought) and got baptized in the lake at Furman University in July, 1975. But, in reality, I was lost. I feel like today there are many people going to church and reading their Bibles and thinking they are saved and are lost. Whoever will may come. I thought I did, but had no clue what salvation meant. My life had not changed. You see, I believed, but never received.

Back to pancreatitis. I stayed in ICU for nine days. I stayed in the hospital a total of 19 days. During this time, I lost 46 pounds. I simply had so much poison in my system that I was nearly dead, living life in a very unmanageable way. Drinking and drugs had consumed my life to a point I couldn't function during the day without them. I was simply in a bondage that was totally beyond my control. I wouldn't have relationships with others because it would hinder my activities with my active addiction.

After I left the hospital, the doctor told me I could die quickly if I ever picked it up again. Six months later, I was worse than I had ever been. They say addiction is a progressive illness. Well, I am proof that it is. My illness led me down so many dark paths. The places I used to go to get my stuff was in 'crack houses'—with people carrying guns, bad people I associated with.

In 1992, I got in some trouble with a friend in Virginia. Because of a DUI, I had to spend 48 hours in jail. At this time, my addiction consisted of beer, crack, marijuana, pills. I had become what you might call a junkie. My Dad used to say he could look me in the eyes and know if I was home—in other words,, he knew if I was high or not.

It was very sad to be a lost person and try to raise a five-year-old son, who came with my first marriage. In the second year of my first marriage, my daughter was born, on July 17, 1996. I was not saved, yet God loved me



Putting Jesus First (Cont'd)

By Brian McNeely

enough to provide me with children who have, to this day, blessed my life. My addiction was very active during the whole time I was married, and it would become like a roller coaster. I had many difficult episodes, and, on a Wednesday night in March, 2001, after I had a day full of alcohol and drugs, we as a family were on our way to a nearby church we were attending in Dacusville. We ended up stopping at Rock Springs Baptist Church. I remember sitting in the balcony. I started listening to Pastor David, and the Holy Spirit came upon me and put me under conviction. Right then and there, I asked the Lord to come into my heart, and I know He saved me. My life changed at that instant. I got baptized at Rock Springs. At that time, my life was totally transformed. I had always been a good guy. I just struggled with addictions and had no direction in my life. I did really well, got involved in church, and my life changed.

After about nine months of being clean, after doing what I knew would keep me clean, which consisted of daily Bible study, prayer and a personal relationship with Jesus., I started feeling that I had this addiction whipped, and I stopped doing on a daily basis the things that I knew would enable me to stay clean. I got complacent. Another reason was I had not totally surrendered to my Lord's will—for example, if you ask Jesus into your house, but you have a bonus room you haven't invited Him into. A person can't do that. It's a total surrender in a person's life.

So, after about nine months of being clean, I found myself in what I now call 'stinking thinking.' I had already gone back out in my mind about a month before I actually used. For three months, I really started in active addiction again. I picked up right where I left off. As I mentioned earlier, it's a progressive illness. It's almost as if I had not had any clean time at all during those three

months. I was separated from my first wife and moved in with my sister and brother-in-law in Greer. After one night of drugs, I was on my way to work at 6:15 am., traveling down Highway 123. Half a mile from work, I had an accident, when a lady, who had been at a bar all night, walked out in front of me, and my Jeep hit her. I stopped and picked her up in my Jeep. I rushed her to St. Francis Hospital. She was dead on arrival. Her alcohol level was 0.29%, three times the limit then. They gave me a breathalyzer, and I measured .03, so it was ruled an accident. But what if I had not run out of money the night before? I might have been charged with felony DUI. I simply call this God doing for me what I can't do for myself.

Have you heard the phrase, the Lord took me to the woodshed? Well I was at rock bottom in my life. I was so down from the events that had transpired. I had nowhere to go but to pick myself up and get help. I went to Wellsprings, a treatment facility in Williamston. I talked to Pastor David, and he was a great encouragement to me and told me Psalm 46 would be of great help for me. He told me to call him at any time and let me know that, no matter what, he would be there for me.

My first wife divorced me. Things were very bad in my life for the next three months. I lived with my Mom and Dad. They had never given up on me. They took me in. I still had a driver's license, but for six months my Dad took me everywhere. I had the attitude that I had gone to any length to get my alcohol and drugs, and I figured I could also go to any length to stay clean.

I have been clean (delivered) since May of 2002. The Lord has done so many things in my life, only because today I have totally surrendered to His will in my life. I am so thankful I had my defining moment in my life. I was at a point in my life I had nothing, and I mean nothing except for my Mom and Dad, brothers and sisters, and family and my daughter.

I lost my first family. I lost my house. I lost everything. The Lord loved me so much that He's kept me around for a purpose—to tell my story, and I'm not going to ever miss another opportunity to share how He loves me. Jesus has restored everything in my life. My wife, Debbie, loves Jesus and keeps me focused. We have a new house, also. We are active members of Rock Springs Baptist Church, Bible Fellowship, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night. I am satisfied that God has put people in my life to help me with my accountability. I'm involved with a prayer group with some 45 men and talk on a daily basis with several.

My wife and I are in the Shekinah Glory Bible Fellowship class. I became the assistant teacher with the nudging of the late Redmond Coyle. I met Redmond for the first time after I had been clean for about two and a half years. He heard me tell someone my story one day. The very next Wednesday night service, he approached me and asked to hear my story. I sat, telling him my story, for more than one hour, and we created a bond. That is another example of God doing for me what I couldn't do for myself.

Redmond was truly an amazing person who had a love in his heart for Christ. He took me in, and we became great friends. We started spending time together, and how blessed I am to have had such a tremendous person as Redmond as a mentor in my life. So many times, I have remembered things he told me. Oh, how I wish he was still around, so I could bounce things off of him, to ask advice, and to just watch him and the way he always put Christ first in his life. What a godly example he led me with.

You see, It's simple. If you put Christ first in your life and totally surrender your life to Jesus, He will help you stay clean and sober, and He'll provide you with everything you need to have an opportunity to lead a God-filled life.

I do know now that God does business with those who mean business with Him.

Putting Jesus First (Cont'd)

By Brian McNeely

Today, I lean not on my understanding of my will, but acknowledge Him in all my ways, and He guides me in a godly life.

I am such a blessed man. I have more material things than I ever had. I have a tremendous Christian mate and awesome children.

I have a great church family, and I'm involved in several ministries. My busi-

ness has been profitable for providing us with our needs.

The reason I have been blessed so much is simply I have put Christ first in my life. I have been faithful to Christ in all avenues of my life. Most important, my tithing has been faithful, and I am satisfied that's the main reason; also, because I have been a witness for what Christ

has done in my life—not only with my talk but more importantly with my life's walk.

I put Jesus first in everything. I love when our Pastor says "Faith, Family, and Friends."

I put Jesus first in my life.



Broken and Spilled Out

By Amanda Malone

For a year, I have felt disappointment,

discouraged, alone, invisible, unloved, depressed, unworthy and dead inside. All of these things are lies from the devil.

As I reached for God through scripture, prayer and just pure begging, He was distant. I tried to get close to Him. I have always heard that if you feel that God is distant, then who moved? I wasn't moving!!! I was trying so hard to get close to Him. I prayed and prayed and prayed for Him to reveal Himself to me. And every time I thought He was answering my prayer, I was coming up short.

Again! I felt the anger grow inside of me and the wall that I was building. I tried to see the promises of God. That He will not leave us or forsake us. Well, that wasn't toward me evidently. Because He did leave me, or so I felt, which is another lie from Satan.

I believe that Satan was trying to steal, kill, and destroy me. He was stealing my hope, my love, and my faith. He wanted to kill me. He wanted me to feel dead inside. I didn't want to kill myself, I just didn't want to live anymore. He wanted to destroy me so he would think he had the victory. But he doesn't have the victory. God does. Because I saw the light. Finally.

One afternoon after school my 5-year-

old-son Jon was helping me water the roses in our garden that's up on a hill away from our house. He had his little watering can and he would fill it up as far as he could. He would carry it to the top of the hill and he would look in it and all the water would be gone out of it. He would walk back down the hill to the water hose and fill it up again. He did that about 4-5 times. He began to get discouraged and started to cry.

He said "Mommy, I keep filling up my watering can and it keeps getting empty...I guess it has a hole in it!" I gently said, "Me too, son". He had no idea what I truly meant but I felt that way.

I was filling up myself with what I thought God wanted me to do to get close to Him. But I was coming up short, and empty.

The other night I told my husband Lee that I had enough. I was done with God. If He wasn't going to help me after all this time (and I didn't feel like I was asking for much), then I was done. I told him I didn't want to be disappointed anymore.

Lee then stood up to me and said that he is the spiritual leader of our house and he was not going to allow me to give up. I prayed that God would reveal Himself to me like never before. And He did. It was Sunday and we were heading for church. With everything I was going through, I was tired of showing up at church with

all my hurts, and unbelieving spirit, and smiling and pretending that everything was ok. But off to church we went!

The morning started off with the encouragement of people and the beautiful songs from the soloists and choir. The preacher started his sermon and stopped. God was moving! One person after another stood up and shared what they were facing. I realized that I was not alone in my journey. There is strength in numbers and God gave the church the opportunity to pray for each other and not hide behind the fear of their struggles.

After church, we went to have lunch at my in laws. After lunch, we all gathered together, and prayed, holding hands. We poured out our cries to God. The power of prayer is what I needed to get closer to God, to see Him working in my life. I prayed for a better relationship with God so I could be a better wife and mother; so I could be the Proverbs 31 woman that that Bible talks about.

After a year in the valley, He allowed me to have a deeper relationship with Him on a whole other level. It was not easy. I was ready to give up. It was hard to praise Him in the storm. And it's not over. But He will be my light in the darkness.

If you believe that God exists to make you comfortable, you will find Him very absent in your discomfort. But if you believe as scripture teaches, God exists to make you Holy. --James MacDonald



God Can Still Do Miracles

By Janice Baxter

The 1990's had not been particularly good for me but I seemed to manage with the help of my Heavenly Father. Many ups and down had come and gone. I had had sickness after sickness; with the latest being diagnosed with melanoma. This was a miracle in itself. My mother had been very sick with a flu-like illness and I had been taking her back and forth to doctors.

Well, guess what, I came down with the same thing, which was a blessing. While the doctor was checking my breathing he asked me about the large mole on my back. I didn't even know it was there. Through a whirlwind of tests I had it removed and received the news that it was melanoma. If I had not caught my mother's cold, it probably would have been too late, the doctor said.

While I still had the bandage on, my oldest son Jason told me he and his family were moving to his wife Kim's hometown, Anaheim, California, in two weeks. My youngest son, Josh and his wife Heather had just had a baby girl, Madison.

She was burned on a cruise liner in December at eight months old and airlifted to Miami and then to Emory in Atlanta because that is where they lived. Soon after that, their marriage was beginning to fall apart and, at two years old, Madison came to live with us.

I say all this to say that maybe this was a lot to handle but this was only the beginning. After trying to get back together several times, Heather and Josh were calling it quits. Then I got the call that Heather was pregnant with twin girls.

We had two girls in high school who were one year apart and planning for college. One day Mike my husband came home and said that due to downsizing he had lost his job of 17 years. We had saved some for college but not nearly enough. We struggled through with his severance pay and his doing small jobs. Then the miracles, I call them, started to happen. Bad things still happened, but the good things far outweighed the bad.

At the time, we had 14 horses which take a lot of hay and horse feed. A friend called and offered Mike free hay if he would deliver some of his hay. On the first delivery, Mike noticed a young man from our church was there. This young man had just married and moved to Pelzer. When he introduced Mike to his father-in-law, they became friends. This father-in-law, Bill, offered Mike a job. He said, "You probably won't want the job since it is way out in the country at Eden Farms. Wow, we live two miles from there! It was building a hay barn. Between building the barn and delivering hay, we were doing alright.

Then a man who I guess preys on people in hard situations, called Mike and offered him an investment in his company. The return was really good so Mike took some of his retirement (\$24,000) and invested with this man who claimed to be a Christian. He would pay us small amounts to keep us hanging on. He said that in two years, we would have more than enough for the two girls' college (which the money had been for). He finally disappeared and took our money.

In February of the next year, Heather, our daughter-in-law, called to say that she and Madison had no where to go. They were living in a friend's home sleeping on a pile of their clothes in the corner of a room. Mike and I looked at each other and both knew we had to take them in. At 6 1/2 months, we went in for a doctor's appointment and he said we should rush to the hospital because she was severely bleeding. She gave birth to twin girls who weighed 2 lbs. 1 oz. and 1 lb. 15 oz.

Remember the father-in-law, Bill (with the hay), well, his wife was the neonatal nurse. When Heather came home, she had an infection and the home nurse was my daughter's future mother-in-law—small world. And these are all very strong Christians who spoke to the hearts of my family.

A lady had a hay delivery and it turned out she had Hepatitis, the same as me. Since she had lived in Charlotte, she knew of new treatments. I tried some of these treatments and due to that, my Hepatitis C is now very near remission. We became friends and she kept me up-

dated on all new things they were discovering about Hep C. She was a nurse who helped me keep going when I did not want to.

Oh, about the twins, they are now 14 years old and, due to some unfortunate circumstances, they were adopted by a very rich couple in Greenville. We have not seen them in 12 years. We see them on Facebook but never in person.

We did get custody of Madison. Becoming a mother at 50 years old of a two year old has had its challenges, but I would not change it if I had to. Mike still did not have a job at that point. I read about a job in the newspaper at a very large church in Greenville. I told him he should just check it out. A sister of one of the people in this story called and said she worked there and would give him a good word. He was immediately hired and has been there for 15 years.

I am sure I have forgotten some of the miracles and people who touched our lives. God knows who they are and how each enriched and changed our lives. God knew these things would happen and that we would be amazed. God takes care of His own, maybe not like we planned but like He planned. We just have to follow His will.

And both girls did go to college and finish. God saw us through this and the money seemed to always be there. He really provided during that time. He is so amazing!

Just keep close to God and follow His leading and He will take you the way you should go.

Proverbs 3:5-6
Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.



What Breast Cancer Taught Me

By Sharon Hawkins

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Amid the yellows, golds, and oranges of the beautiful Autumn, glistens an unmistakable pink. It flows in fountains. It covers billboards and dons football uniforms on national television. It sprinkles through the congregations on Pink Sunday.

Before 2005, I was a thoughtful observer. When my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer that year, I became a spirited supporter, one who was angry at the disease and determined to see it eradicated. I wore my pink on my bumper sticker. I wore my pink on my t-shirt. I joined the fight, as one whose family member had been attacked by this disease.

Then in 2011, breast cancer knocked on my house door. I was diagnosed with stage 1 breast cancer myself. I had radical double mastectomies and two reconstruction surgeries that year. The surgeries left me with a debilitating nerve pain illness that still affects my life every waking minute today.

Now pink is more than a color to me. It is a part of my signature. In addition to becoming a recurring theme in my wardrobe, I now wear it on my heart. I am now a part of a pink sisterhood, one forever changed by breast cancer.

I am reminded daily of what breast cancer took from me. But, more importantly,

I am reminded daily of what I have gained, of what it has taught me.

First, I learned that breast cancer can happen to anybody. One in every eight women is impacted by it at some point in their life. I had always thought it was one of those dreaded things that happened to other people.

On June 8, 2011, I learned that it can and did happen to me. It took me and my family by surprise, but it did not take God by surprise. He met us right where our need was. He put His arms around us and has carried us through one day at a time.

Secondly, I learned that there was a purpose for my breast cancer. God does not waste a single trial. The hardships that we face are for our good or for His glory. In the case of my diagnosis, it has been for both.

Praise God that I am now a four-year survivor of breast cancer and melanoma! I just had my six-month oncologist's checkup, and my doctor said I got an A+ on my cancer report card. My next check-up will be just before my fifth anniversary, that is the mark where they say you have won your fight.

During these four years, God has given me numerous opportunities to share with other women who are walking this journey, sometimes just to listen and understand. God comforts us so we can comfort others. This has been a precious

gift to me as I have received the greatest blessing of all from these relationships.

I have learned in all of this what the beauty of a woman really is. Like many of my pink sisters, often, after my surgeries, I have felt unattractive physically.

God keeps reminding me that He has stamped His beauty on my heart, and neither cancer nor surgery can ever take that away from me. I am beautiful because I am His precious princess made in His image.

A crucial lesson I learned was also to reorder my life. When faced with the possibility of having to tell my family goodbye, I gained a clearer focus of what was most important to me. Material things lessened in value. Time spent with family and friends became more precious. Never has a tomb stone read, "I wish I had worked more."

Gratitude for God's blessings through this storm and a second chance to be well have given me a greater sense of urgency to share with others about the most important thing, the saving grace and mercy of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

More than anything else, I have learned that God is always faithful, one day at a time. He still performs miracles. He still answers prayer. He restores broken bodies, broken spirits and broken hearts.

I have learned that when I cannot, He can. And, not only that, I am so thankful that He does!



A Miracle Instead

By Reagan Roberts

My dearest little Averie,

Now that you are here,
I wish for you the bravery,
I had that brought you near.

Life was at its toughest,
I managed thick and then.
Remembering the rough times,
will one day help you win.
The circumstance that brought you here,
I never will regret,

Mistakes I made to bring you near,
All changed the day we met.
Never will you be to me,
A careless thing I did.
Perhaps you're such a love,
To be a miracle instead.

It was the most important Sunday of my life—that Summer of 1972. Jesus had tugged on my little 9-year-old heart and asked if He could come inside. My Pastor, Robert Orr, led me to accept Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior that day.

After the service, as he wrapped up, he sent me over to sit with my dad who was sitting on the front row of my little country church. I hopped up on Daddy’s knee and he threw his arms around me and burst into loud happy tears. He couldn’t contain his joy and thankfulness to God for saving his little girl. I learned right then and there by my dad’s reaction that this was the best decision I could have ever made. Through the years, I have learned that he was absolutely right. There is no better friend than Jesus and He gets me through each and every day of my life.

My dad had brought me and my mom and my brother to church. He lived his life for the Lord in front of us. While he is one of the strongest men I have ever known, he is definitely the most humble. Every time they would call on my dad to pray at church, he would cry. Yet he would go to great lengths to make others laugh too. He has always worn his sweet emotions on his sleeve and everyone loves him because of it. He is real. He

loves God. He loves his family. He loves people.

26 years ago, Daddy was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease. In 1991, he had brain surgery at the Mayo Clinic to help with his tremors. For many years, this cruel disease has ravaged his body. Tremors have stolen his energy and strength. At times, the medication has caused him to have confusion. Because of the tiredness of his body, he has slept for large parts of every day for as long as I can remember.

My mom cared for my dad for many years of his illness, Then in 2005, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, then colon cancer. After her brave fight, she was healed when she entered heaven on March 10, 2008. We miss her more than words. With a broken heart, my dad has pushed on.

Though he has been limited by this disease, two activities that he has always enjoyed the most are watching Westerns on TV and eating. Several years ago he lost his ability to swallow and all of his food and drinks have to be taken as honey nectar thickness now. He has told me that none of it tastes good any more. He has lost so much weight as he is unable at times to stay awake long enough to

swallow his food even when someone feeds him. As the weight has gone, so has his stamina.

His vision and hearing have continued to decline and he is not able to enjoy his Westerns anymore. Even though Parkinson’s has attacked his body relentlessly, it has never been able to break his wonderful loving spirit.

While he struggles to communicate with his friends and family, most of the time his words are too soft to understand and his hearing too frail for our words. Yet when he sees his family, especially his grandchildren, there is still that unmistakable sparkle in his eye.

While he has become a shell of the man he used to be, in my book, he will always be a giant—a determined, strong man of God who loves fiercely, and encourages all who know him.

He is my hero. I strive to be like him, to follow his example of love and commitment to God. I will always be a daddy’s girl and because of that sunny Sunday in 1972, I will have all eternity to spend with him. He will be well and whole and I’m convinced he will still have that sweet unmistakable sparkle in his eye.

You ...

You are not alone. Isaiah 41:10

You are beautiful. Psalm 45:11

You are unique. Psalm 139:13

You are loved. Jeremiah 31:3

You are special. Ephesians 2:10

You were created for a purpose. Jeremiah 29:11

You are cared for. Ephesians 8:17-19

You are lovely. Daniel 12:3

You are precious. 1 Corinthians 6:20

You are strong. Psalm 168:35

You are important. 1 Peter 2:9

You are forgiven. Psalm 103:12

You are a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17

You are protected. Psalm 121:3

You are empowered. Philippians 4:13

You are chosen. John 15:16

You are family. Ephesians 2:19

You were fearfully and wonderfully made. Psalm 139:14

You are held. Psalm 73:23

Isaiah 43:1-2

... “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.



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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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Intense love does not measure. It just gives. -Mother Teresa

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