

GRACE IN THE WILDERNESS

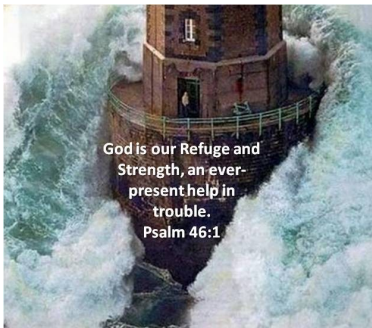
A MINISTRY FOR TODAY'S BUSY WOMAN



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

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God is our Refuge and Strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

Surging

By Sharon Hawkins

Can you relate? Is your life surging? Do you ever feel that you're really trying to be still and let Him be God, but the second you feel you're starting to embrace the knowledge of who He is, starting to rest in His arms, along comes another wave and down you go again?

Our sinking is not because the Lord is not able to hold us up. It is a result of our taking our eyes off Him like Peter did in Matthew 14:29-31.

"And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "Lord, save me."

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

How many times have I been there, done that? I'm thankful He always saves me when I fall. And I know He can help me in this surge.

An on-line dictionary gives two definitions of surging: 1. Rising or moving in a billowing or swelling manner. 2. Rolling or being tossed about on waves, as a boat.

In the storms of life, Today's Busy Woman gets tossed about like a dinghy in a tsunami. She gets afraid.

The disciples knew her fear.

Mark 4:37-40 says, "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and said unto him, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, "Peace, be still." And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?"

Do you see a doubting theme here? I know I struggle with it.

In the storm, Hillsong's Oceans lyrics are such an inspiration to me:

"Spirit, lead me when my trust is without borders. Let me walk upon the waters wherever You would call me. Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander and my faith would be made stronger in the presence of my Savior. I will call upon Your name. Keep my eyes above the waves. My soul will rest in Your embrace. I am Yours and You are mine."

How can we ever forget that, in our storms, Jesus is in our boat? All we have to do is call to Him. He is not only willing to help us, He is eager.

He whispers "Peace be still." Sometimes He's talking to the storm and sometimes He's talking to us.

My friend Josie and I have been friends since 1989. She is my former business partner and one of my dearest friends in the world. Because she is that kind of friend and because she knows I've been going through a very difficult time recently, she sent me a tremendously encouraging note that God nudged her to write. In it, she reminded me of Psalm 46:1-3.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah."

She called my attention to the last two words—surging and Selah. She said my life is surging right now, but God says "Selah"—best translated, "Stop and Listen". Be still and know that He is God.

Hmmmm ... Lord, I'm trying. Really I am. It's hard when it's all hitting at once. My dad's declining health, a crisis with my youngest son's special needs, my business facing Healthcare Reform, my continuing 24/7 battle with nerve pain—the surge is overwhelming. I know I'm whining but please, Lord, help me!

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Visit our Grace In The Wilderness Facebook Page and "Like us" to receive updates about our newsletters and conferences.
Our 5th Annual Empowered Jesus Girl Teen Conference is November 22, 2013.
Info at www.wildernessgrace.org

Mark 4:41

... What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?



Checkbook and Calendar Tattletales

By Diana Kilgore

What do my checkbook and calendar say about what's important to me? I've heard it said, "Don't tell me what your priorities are, just show me your checkbook and calendar and I'll tell you what your priorities are."

Perhaps you are familiar with the standard list of **God first, Family second, Work third, Ministry fourth.** At first glance, you probably think, as I did, "my life is perfectly prioritized." Well, then you start to break it down and line it up against the Bible, God's measuring stick. Let's take a quick look at how we really measure up. (Now would be a good time to say a little prayer that God would help you to make wise decisions after He opens your eyes to the truth.)

Do you remember when the Christian community was up in arms because of the threat to remove "In God We Trust" from our currency? You may have even been in that group; however, do we really trust in God or do we trust in the value of the money? Matthew 6:21 reminds us, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Okay, on the count of three, open your checkbook. One, two, THREE!

God First (Mal. 3:10 - "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...") - what was the first check you wrote after depositing that paycheck? Is there a tithe check written to your local church? What

about an offering above that tithe? Any giving to other charitable organizations? Hmmm?

Family Second (I Tim. 5:8 - "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.") - add up those necessary living expenses now. Notice I said *necessary* - like food, mortgage/rent or utilities.

Work Third (II Thess. 3:10 - "...if any would not work, neither should he eat.") - how much are you spending for fuel to get to and from work? Any uniforms or dry cleaning costs?

Ministry Fourth (In John 13:15 Jesus tells us, "For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done unto you.") How much are you spending to serve? Fuel costs? Charitable purchases out of your own pocket? (Always nice but not always necessary. Remember some give financially because they cannot give physically and vice versa, so share the blessing.) Congratulations, you're half-way through.

Now, let's talk about time - 24 hours, 1440 minutes, or 86400 seconds - no matter how you look at it, that's all we get each day. Let's see how you're spending your time. Get ready, get set, get your calendar, Go!

God First (Matt. 6:33 - "But seek ye first the kingdom of God...") How much time did you spend in prayer? What about personal devotions? Church attendance?

Family Second (Eph. 5:22 - "Wives, sub-

mit yourselves to your own husbands...", Eph. 5:25 - "Husbands, love your wives...", Eph. 6:4 - "Bring them [children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Deut. 6:5-7 - "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, all with all thy soul, and with all thy might...and these words...thou shalt teach to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.") Any family outings? How much time was actually spent with your family? Remember, just being home does not mean you are "with" the family.

Work Third (Eccl. 9:10 - "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." However, Prov. 23:4 warns, "Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint.") - How does your work schedule look? 40 hours or less? Overtime? Still working on business even at home?

Ministry Fourth (Rom. 12:11 - "...fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.") But heed Christ's warning in John 10:41, "Martha, Martha, you are worried about many things.") How much time do you spend serving others? Have you visited a shut-in lately? Mailed a card to encourage your Pastor? Dropped off dinner to a struggling family?

God, Family, Work, Ministry, but the greatest of these is GOD! Let Him be your priority in every area!

3 Secrets To Protecting Your Joy

By Tanya Curren

It can sound so simple—you need to protect your joy. So many external pressures arise that can pile up emotionally, mentally and even physically that we can find ourselves losing our peace and joy.

All of us want to be happy, which is totally normal. But if your happiness depends on your circumstances, it will flee when your money runs out, when you experience a health crisis, when you can't "fix" a circumstance happening in your family or when you experience a massive crisis of faith.

There is a big difference between pursuing happiness and experiencing joy. Happiness is based on your current emotion or feeling. True joy is the confident, never-ending assurance of God's love and presence in your life! Joy is having complete dependence on Christ, no matter what circumstances you are facing.

Check out Philippians, Paul's joy letter to the Philippian believers. This book of the Bible is also considered a joyful book because it shows the importance of joy in the life of a Christian. Think about Paul's life for a moment and consider ALL he

faced as he served Christ. Imagine being very wealthy, extremely educated, having a great reputation and yet in your same lifetime being beaten, jailed, ship wrecked and going broke. This man experienced lots of highs and WAY more lows! And yet, he is the one that teaches us about joy and how to have it in every situation in life!

Think of your life and then think of Paul's. Can you truly say that you are able to cling to your joy throughout every situation? In my life, this is something I have had to continually work on,

3 Secrets To Protecting Your Joy (Cont'd)

By Tanya Curren

and even now I have to choose to daily focus on what I am thankful for instead of focusing on the trials I face.

I married my husband, Rick, in 1995 and we only had \$50 in the bank and I brought about \$5,000 worth of credit card debt to the table! (Rick was thrilled about that ... not!) So we started off with basically nothing. Throughout our 18-year marriage, we've had great highs. Rick had a job that brought in great money and we traveled extensively. We have a healthy and amazing son who does everything with us and we have had the funniest and most wonderful times making memories that will last forever.

But throughout our marriage, we have also had some extremely hard times that brought us to the point of despair. I was in a coma and experienced some of the worst pain imaginable. Our son Pierce was in the NICU. We went from making great money to making almost nothing. We had a 401K—now we don't. And we've experienced many relationships that have caused us deep pain.

So how did Paul – and how do we – get through ALL that life brings and still retain our joy?

THE SECRET TO CONTENTMENT
Philippians 4:11-13: Here Paul is teaching us his secret! Think about it – if we hear of a bestselling book that gives secrets to success, we'll run out and buy it so that we too can be “in the know”! Or, have you ever found yourself up late at night watching infomercials because you can't sleep and you buy something you really don't need just because the salesperson promised it would change your life? (Hello...Ab Roller, anyone?)

Well, this is a million times better than any product or “secret to success” book you can own!

Right here in Philippians 4, Paul is telling us that the secret to contentment—whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want—is knowing that he can do ALL things through Christ who gives him strength. The secret to contentment is having the strength of Christ in your life! This is why it is so important that you put ALL of your focus on Him.

THE SECRET TO KNOWING JESUS
Philippians 3: 7-10: The secret to knowing Jesus is pursuing Him. James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” These are not just suggestions in the Bible, these are promises for YOU!

If you find yourself consumed with stress and are focused on things you cannot change, I encourage you to set healthy boundaries, make a plan for where you will spend your time, focus on your purpose, pray about the words you say to others and scenarios you may face, and ask God for His unending wisdom. The more you plan in advance and the more you pray and release situations to God, the more peace you will have.

The more peace you have, the deeper your relationship is with Jesus. And the deeper your relationship grows, the more you know Him and the firmer and deeper your roots grow, bringing you unshakable faith. It is a beautiful and lifelong process, so don't get discouraged along the way. Just daily choose to follow these steps and you too will gain the knowledge and understand the secrets to protecting your joy!

THE SECRET FOR PEACE
Philippians 4:6: Paul encourages us here

to be anxious about nothing. When we choose to give God our anxieties through prayer, He promises that His peace which “transcends ALL understanding, will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.”

The more you meditate on your surroundings, circumstances and things you can't change, the more anxiety will creep in and overtake you. But when you daily choose to focus on the things you do have and stay positive as you give your burdens to the Lord, the more joy you will experience.

How do we do this? In Philippians 4:8-9, Paul teaches us that we do this by focusing on, “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if ANYTHING is excellent or praiseworthy – think about these things.” Then the peace of God will be with you!

Here's the bottom line: if you want to worry less, pray more. It's that simple! The more you pray, the more you develop your relationship with God and the more you rely on Him instead of external sources.

If you listen to Paul's wisdom and incorporate his insights into your daily life, you will live the life God intended for you to live. It is a process that takes time, but is definitely worth every ounce of your time and effort. It will pay off with big rewards of peace and true inner joy for you!

(This article and other encouraging and empowering resources are available for you and your family at: www.LiveGuiltFree.org.)

Don't Mess With Crazy

By Brenda Horne

I have come to realize that I just was not built for mornings. The harder I try to get up, the harder I fight to NOT get up.

I'm like a 13-year-old teenager, rebelling against the alarm clock. If I have one minute and two seconds before my alarm sounds, I'm going to lie in my bed until that very last second. Then once the alarm goes off, I will hit the snooze button over and over until my con-

science tells me I am going to get fired from my job if I don't get up RIGHT NOW! At which time, I literally hit the floor running.

My dryer is my iron: toss in wrinkled clothes, pull' em out ironed ... I love it!! My bacon and eggs breakfast is in the form of a rectangle pastry that I pop in the toaster. My coffee ... what am I talking about? I don't have time to fix coffee!

I run through the house fixing lunches, hunting socks, grabbing clothes, looking for lost earrings, letting the dogs out.

I do manage to get myself dressed, fix my hair, brush my teeth and apply a base coat of make-up (the rest of the make-up will be applied *in the car* on the way to work). I then grab my purse, car keys, phone and dart out the door.

Don't Mess With Crazy (Cont'd)

By Brenda Horne

Oh and did I mention I have a daughter I drive to school in the morning?. She has her own routine and her own pace, I try not to pull her into the whirlwind of my chaotic morning routine but sometimes we cross paths and it's like throwing two bobcats in a croaker sack ... it just gets messy. So we try to play nice in the mornings so no one gets killed.

Yes, I know my mornings could be easier and life could be less hectic, if I would just GET UP when the alarm goes off the first time. And therein lies the problem, I hate getting up. I usually wake up *before* the alarm goes off, but I cannot make myself put my feet on the floor and get out of that bed. And yes, yes. . . I've read all the articles, bought all the gadg-

ets, tried all the tricks and even prayed the Good Lord would physically shove me out of my bed ... yet there I lay... under my warm covers... every morning like a spoiled child. (I know it's sad ... what can I say ...I struggle)

Now I know for certain, that almost every Mother out there handles mornings *way better* than I do and I am so glad you do. (Yay, to the morning Moms!! You GO Girls!!) But for those few Moms who are like me and can't seem to get it together in the mornings ... I'm here for ya sister! I mean... we, "Non-morning Moms", do get the job done, just not as eloquently as the "Morning Moms".

Also you're probably wondering if this crazy morning routine of mine drives my

husband insane. Of course it does, but we have been married a LONG time and he knows sometimes you just don't mess with "crazy".

Yet there is hope for even me and my crazy...the Bible says so...

Philippians 3:12

*Not that I have already attained,
or am already perfected;
but I press on ...*



Let's Go Planting: Self-Control

By Cathy Whisnant

This issue we are planting the seed of Self-Control. Please don't confuse discipline with self-control. Discipline is punishment to correct or train. Self-Control is being able to control your emotions, desires, and actions. Self-Control is also the ability to say no when the majority is saying yes. Proverbs 25:28, "A person without self-control is like a house with its doors and windows knocked out."

It is so easy for our children to cave under peer pressure when they haven't been taught to stand on what God calls us to do rather than on the world's standards. *Titus 2:11-12*, "...salvation teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and Godly lives." In other words, teach your children what to stand for or they will fall for anything. Our children must know what they believe and what their standards and morals are before the temptation hits! It is much easier to allow temptation to overcome you if you don't have your morals set in rock ~ the Solid Rock!

One of the most important parts of planting self-control is teaching your child how to overcome the temptation Satan

will put before them throughout their lives. It is amazing how many of us focus on teaching good manners, respect, and God's love; but we fail to teach them Satan's tactics for taking them down and how to fight this evil influence in our lives. Our children will never face a bully as big, bad, and mean as Satan. It is not a matter of "if" he tempts them, but "when" he tempts them. Satan is no respecter of persons. He throws himself at all of us time after time.

Even when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, the scripture says he left Him for a more opportune time. If we are not teaching and leading by example how to overcome his fiery darts, he will hit his target every time. Neither time nor space allows me to go as deep as I would like with this subject. I hope you will study God's Word and become a master teacher in the area of self-control and temptation. I have read the quote, "Opportunity only knocks once, but temptation leans on the doorbell." How many of us know that to be true? We are always within reach of Satan's tempting, and just as our nation has a defense plan in place against our enemy nations, we better have a self-defense plan in place against the greatest terrorist of all time, SATAN!

Plant into the heart of your children the

fact that they are never beyond God's reach. Teach them that according to 1 Corinthians 10:12-13, God has prepared an escape route from every temptation that is thrown their way. Every temptation has an accompanying escape hatch. We must teach them how to be still in God's presence so they hear God whispering His escape plan to them.

The best way to teach your children self-control over Satan is to take them through a study of Ephesians 6:13-17 where God teaches us how to dress for battle. Teach them to put on "the breastplate of righteousness," and explain to them exactly what that means? Most children have no idea what the word righteousness means. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that you explain this suit of armor to them in terms they understand for their age group.

So, gather your army today and dress them for battle so when the battle begins, they have been taught how to have self-control over the circumstance because "...greater is He in them than he that is in the world." They will know God's battle plan against the great deceiver, Satan, and they will be able to do this because mom has been diligent to teach them how to dress for this great battle Satan will try to wage throughout their lives!

The Eyes of Jesus

By Taylor Hawkins

For a moment, imagine Jesus is standing right in front of you. He has a big smile on his face, and His eyes are staring straight into yours. The joy and acceptance that you feel in your heart at this moment is unfathomable. His perfect love for you is radiating from His glorious face. From your head to your toes, all you can feel is pure elation.

As this feeling of pure bliss consumes your entire being, you realize that those eyes that look at you with such tenderness are the same eyes that saw the universe take form at the beginning of time. You find yourself dumbfounded at the fact that everything that has ever existed, does exist, and will exist came solely from the man standing opposite of you. His knowledge and wisdom are immeasurable.

This man is aware of every event that has ever happened for the entire history and future of the cosmos. He knows every atom in existence and its exact location at any moment from the beginning to the end. You realize that you could never fully imagine the depths of this perfect man's understanding.

The radiance of holy kindness and goodness that flows from every inch of this man overwhelms you. In your life, you have committed so many sins that you could never begin to count them all. Even though it's a difficult thing to say, you know in your heart that you deserve an eternity in Hell. You recognize that there is a difference between you and this Holy King. He is perfect. His soul is not tainted with the sin that yours is. There is absolutely nothing wrong in Him. You realize that this man, Jesus, is

goodness in its purest form.

But this doesn't make sense, does it? Why would this perfect and holy God see such a filthy and unworthy sinner and smile so tenderly and lovingly? The answer is love.

He was born in a barn and laid in a manger. He walked on this earth that He created to be perfect but was ruined by mankind's sin and rebellion. He faced everything that we do and more. He ministered to the lowest of the lows and healed the blind, deaf, and lame. He raised people from the dead. He spread the Good News of His kingdom to people all around the land. After all the good He had done, He was betrayed by one of His closest friends for a few pieces of silver. He was captured and imprisoned despite having done no wrong. He was beaten senselessly, beyond what you could ever imagine. Whips dug into his skin and ripped his flesh from the bone. His holy hands and feet were nailed to a nasty, splintered cross. This humble and perfect man was hung on this cross naked for the entire world to see and was mocked unimaginably when He had committed no crime.

Why would He go through all that? Couldn't He have called down His army of angels to free Him from such injustice? Yes, he certainly could have. Why didn't He then? Once again, the answer is love.

As He hung there in shame and agony, He didn't look at everyone with anger like they all deserved. His holy eyes saw His children. He saw His helpless children who were going to experience an

eternity away from Him and all that is good if He didn't save them. This holy God of perfection had so much love for the people that wronged Him that He died and experienced separation from God so they wouldn't have to. When He closed His eyes as He hung on that horrible cross, He saw you and me. He saw us in heaven with Him. He knew that if He suffered, we wouldn't have to.

With his final breath, the God of the universe uttered, "It is finished." The powers of Hell celebrated in victory as those holy eyes of Jesus closed in death. He was dead. The enemy had won. All hope seemed lost.

But God wasn't finished yet. Jesus had been dead for three days. Then, all of a sudden, those gentle eyes were opened with a power beyond our wildest dreams. Jesus was alive! He conquered death once and for all! He trampled Satan and all evil for us! Jesus was right: It is finished! Because of Him and what He did for us, all the filthy sin that weighs you and me down, has no power over us anymore. We are free! There is a reason why He is smiling at you. He sees you as a holy child of God. Because you believe in Him and His sacrifice, He sees you as righteous and perfect like Him. When you depend on Him, the eyes of Jesus see nothing but a glorious and blameless child of the King!

Why? The answer is love.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

By Tara Posey

Life Interrupted

Oh how I love to go to the tanning bed! It is a spring tradition that I always look forward to.

Well, in April of last year I was following through with my spring tanning. I left the tanning salon that day with an itch on my chest—an itch that had to be scratched. This itch was God sent and it

led to the interruption of my wonderfully ordinary life.

As I scratched, I felt a gumball size lump. No, this lump wasn't there when I did my last self exam. Where in the world did it come from?

I waited a week to see if the lump would go away, but it did not. A doctor I

worked with checked it and said it was probably only a cyst yet we scheduled a mammogram. Two weeks later my husband Eddie and I went to the mammo-gram appointment which also turned into an ultrasound appointment. A biopsy was scheduled which meant we would need to return for results.

Life Interrupted (Cont'd)

By Tara Posey

It took two days for the pathology report. Patiently, Eddie and I sat in a small conference room waiting. We all know that the nurses give the good news and the doctors give the bad news. Well, the nurse stepped in and I was relieved, but she only stayed a moment to tell us the doctor would go over the results with us. The doctor arrives and he doesn't skip a beat ... cancer. Eddie and I were both numb. We honestly expected a great report. Our perfectly normal life had been interrupted. This was not in our plan.

The next few weeks were a blur of diagnostic testing and more doctor appointments. I was sent to a surgeon who proclaimed that the cancer was stage 1 and treatment would be quick and simple. Radiation and a lumpectomy was all I needed. This I could handle. Easy-Breezy, just my style.

Needless to say that surgeon did not view the MRI report and when he did, he referred us to another doctor. Doctor Number Two bumped me up to stage 2 which was still an Easy-Breezy treatment plan. At this point, I was still in control of the situation, which pleased me very much.

God has His way of showing us who truly has control of our lives and little did I know He was about to show out in ours. Doctor Number Two decides to send my test results and MRI to another doctor. I asked for a referral to Dr. Edenfield, not

knowing this was a blessing in disguise. Dr. Edenfield's office schedules us for an 8 a.m. appointment. At this appointment, our lives were completely interrupted.

We arrive to what we thought was another routine doctor's appointment, but we quickly found out this appointment was very different. The appointment was not only with Dr. Edenfield, but also with a team of doctors who were ready to get a treatment plan set up that very day.

At this appointment, we were told I had aggressive stage 3 cancer with lymph node involvement plus the cancer was Her 2+. Can you see where this is going? Yep, that is right ... my Easy-Breezy plan had been blown right out the window.

After 9 hours of information overload, our plan was set. First, more biopsies. Second, mastectomy right side. Third, chemo treatments. Fourth, radiation treatments. Fifth, mastectomy left side with reconstruction.

At the end of this very long day, I knew that without the guidance and grace of God, this journey would not be doable. I gave Him complete control.

Okay, the mastectomy was the easiest part. Yes, yes, I missed my breast, but just knowing that phase of this journey was behind me gave me peace.

On to chemo. Well let's just say it was nothing less than horrible. I lost my beautiful hair and every possible side effect hit me. I spent the next five months in and out of the cancer center and ER almost daily. The stronger I pretended to be, the weaker I became.

I knew God's purpose for this had to be amazing because I honestly felt as if I were going through hell on earth. Such misery must have an awesome purpose, and I tried to remind myself that all interruptions are temporary.

I made it through chemo, then on to radiation. After radiation, I went to Charleston for reconstruction. Through it all, I have lost my breasts, my hair, my nails, my strength and my job; but I never lost my faith. The wind was blown out of my sails but, because of my faith, my boat is still afloat.

Blessings surrounded us daily. God placed all the right people in our lives at the perfect moment. Whatever the need, He supplied. During this journey, my main intent has been to shine for Him so that others would know that this test would soon be a testimony for all those who endure interruptions in their lives.

Psalm 55:22

Cast thy burdens upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee.



Prayer In The Desert, Part 2: This Is God's Grace

By Mary Elisabeth Cutliff

When Samuel was 5, we finally got the diagnosis. It was our worst fear. We knew he was declining.

The doctors thought he had a mitochondrial disorder, but they are very difficult to diagnose. Thankfully, we had started the supplements that they give mito kids when he was 2, and we know they helped him tremendously. He had gone from fussy to happy, irritable to pleasant, from sweet to sweeter. The vitamin supplements are the only treatment for mi-

tochondrial disease ... there is no cure.

So when he was 5, they finally said it's mito ... and there are hundreds of different mitochondrial diseases and he had Leigh's disease ... one of the worst of all.

The mitochondria in your body helps your food produce energy. So if it's not working right you can have many problems.

It made Samuel weak with little or no tone. His hands could hold toys when he was two. But when he was 5, they no

longer could. We were blessed to have my sister and mama as his personal care aids. He needed someone by him all of the time. They were able to help me with him and the juggling of everyone. If I needed time with Samuel, they could help with housework and the other children.

And my husband Tim was the sweetest, dearest daddy in the world to Samuel. He would walk in the door from work every day and go and see Samuel and Samuel would always grin when he walked in.

This Is God's Grace (Cont'd)

By Mary Elisabeth Cutliff

He has always fought for Samuel to have the best in everything. Samuel had the most excellent care and for that I am so grateful. He was loved by all and loved so well in return.

We helped him play. We did exercises. When he turned 7, we gave him tube feedings around the clock because he became unable to tolerate them in his tummy and he was not gaining weight because he moved his legs and arms constantly because of spasticity. Also, with Leigh's disease, he had "spots" on the movement center of his brain, that meant dead spots and there was NOTHING we could do to stop them. But he was smart.

He was stuck in this body that he couldn't control. It was heartbreaking.

Everyone who knew him prayed. We prayed. The elders laid hands on him and prayed. We sought the Lord. We read the Bible daily with him and said verses over and over so that he could say them in his head to the Lord. We were up many nights with him vomiting, very sick and weaker. Many friends started bringing meals and helping us with the children and things around the house. The Lord carried us through this difficult time and we call this **grace**.

Let me try and explain grace for a minute.

"**Grace** is mentioned 170 times in the Bible. Grace is God's unmerited favor. That is, grace is God doing good for us that we do not deserve. In the Bible, grace and mercy are like two heads of the same coin. Mercy is God withholding judgment or evil that I deserve; grace is God giving me blessing or good that I do not deserve. Because of God's mercy, I do not receive the judgment of God against my sins; because of God's grace, I receive eternal life and a promise of heaven though I do not deserve them. Both mercy and grace come to me through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace can also be defined as God's sufficiency or God's fullness in the life of the believer."

Grace to me is when you can't imagine going through something, the unimaginable ... and through the Lord's strength,

you make it because He carries you. This is what the Lord has done for me.

In April 2012, something happened. Samuel started having a fever constantly, he looked miserable and was not himself. We had been back and forth in the hospital many times with aspiration pneumonia and feeding tube problems. And now he wasn't getting better. He started sleeping much more. We thought, "Is this it?" He had always bounced back before and fought hard, but this time he could not. He was leading us through a new season of grief and pain and I was not ready. Our girls were always beside him holding his hand or reading to him. His little brother watched out for him and wanted to snuggle often. Tim and I held him, sang to him and poured all of our love into him. We stayed home mostly all summer and were with him. Our family and friends visited often. The Lord allowed us that time to be together and not busy, just to love him and care for him the best we could. He would have brief times of normal, and we soaked them up. We would take him in the backyard and have him cool off in the pool and move around while we held him. And he would perk up for a few minutes, but then he would be worn out and need to rest again. I cried out to the Lord over and over, "Please heal my precious son! Lord, WHY? Please, Lord, help him!"

After caring for our sweet boy constantly, helping him do everything, pouring our hearts and souls into him, he told us his fight was over. On September 10 with Tim and me beside him loving on him, praying with him and singing with him; our little angel was healed, but not the way we wanted.

We had dreamed and prayed. We didn't care if he couldn't do "normal" things. He touched more in his life than any other 7-year-old I had ever known. He was perfect to us and we cherished him the way he was. Saying goodbye was like having my heart ripped out of my chest. But at the same time I knew he was where we all want to be—in heaven with the Lord and his body was perfect. Every time I am consumed with grief I must think of

how happy and whole he is. He can walk! He can sing! He can worship! **This is God's grace.**

I thought I knew grace before, but this is something no one can fathom and I am getting up every day and having to live without a part of my heart. The Lord is carrying me.

So, are you leaning on the Lord with your life, your child, your marriage? Are you full of worry? Do you have a real reason to worry, but are daily giving it to the Lord and His plan?

2 Corinthians 12:9 says "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

My precious child was weak, but He touched many lives for the Lord. That is God's grace. My family is broken forever, we will never move on, but we are moving forward. I want Samuel's story and our lives to encourage others, so we can all meet in heaven one day! What a glorious picture.

Do you know the Lord as your Savior? God sent His Son Jesus, who lived a perfect life to die on the cross for us. Through the shedding of His perfect blood, we now can ask for forgiveness of our sin and He will wash our sins away. If you aren't living for the Lord who created you, then I tell you now you can have joy and peace in the midst of pain and suffering. You can look forward to eternity in heaven!

I love to picture my boy running through the field of glorious flowers and the sky above him so bright and full of color that we cannot imagine. He starts to sing in a voice that is unearthly and he runs with the other children that were suffering and are now well. They laugh and run to Jesus and He leads them to many adventures of swimming with dolphins and flying with birds, climbing heavenly mountains and praising God.

I can't wait until the day when I see him run for the first time to me and wrap his arms around me and say, "Welcome home, Mommy. I love you."

This is God's grace.



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).

This is a bi-monthly newsletter. Visit www.wildernessgrace.org to subscribe for a free email copy or please call or email us for paper copies.

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Our 5th Annual Empowered Jesus Girl Teen Conference is November 2013.
Info coming soon.
www.wildernessgrace.org

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Don't be afraid to stand for what you believe in, even if that means standing alone. - Unknown

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