



Grace In The Wilderness

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

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Meet Grace In The Wilderness



Meet Grace Ankle. She is the epitome of today's busy woman.

The world says she's not beautiful enough, not slim enough, not smart enough. She's a little clumsy because she's being pulled in every direction, all at the same time.

She is a wife of a man who tries hard but is sometimes lacking, a mother of children who can be rebellious, wayward and needy and a daughter of aging parents who she provides care for but she never feels like she does enough.

She works 40 hours a week because she has to, to make ends meet. She works for a boss who has no sympathy for her situation.

She has friends but not many because she doesn't have time for them. She is basically a good person, or wants to be, but sometimes she's lacking too. She's forgetful, mostly because she has too much to keep up with.

Her biggest fears are that

her husband may leave her for someone more beautiful, more together, or that one of them will lose their job then they'll lose everything because they can't pay their bills. She's afraid her children will turn out to be ax murderers or at least have emotional scars because of her failures. Afraid one of her parents will slip and fall and she can't be there to help.

She lives in the Wilderness. The regions of her Wilderness are marriage, parenting, care-giving, working, finances, other relationships. She also faces pitfalls in her Wilderness—trials and heartaches way bigger than she is and beyond her ability to conquer. Often she's at the end of her rope, trying desperately to tie a knot in it, just to hang on!

She's never off duty even when someone has agreed to take on one of her duties. Her mind is always racing and often her mouth is too.

She is today's busy woman. She herself is struggling to be "Grace"-ful in the Wilderness. More importantly, she's every woman in need of Grace in the Wilderness. Can you relate to her at least on some level? Boy, I can!

She's juggling it all, worrying about it all, trying to do it all, all the time!

There has to be help for her. There IS a Better Way!

The answer has been there all along. There is GRACE In The Wilderness, GOD'S AMAZING GRACE. She is not alone. She is a precious and treasured daughter of the King of the Universe and He is enthralled with her beauty (Ps. 45:11). His love for her is immeasurable. He has made a Way for her, for today's busy woman, even in the Wilderness!

That Way is Jesus, God's only son who came to die for her. He wants to give her the abundant life and that doesn't mean abundant tasks. He doesn't just want to help her with her life or be a part of her life, He wants to be her life!

Jesus is the answer for her weary heart and for all of us.

Jesus is our only Way, our.. Grace in the Wilderness!

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

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A Garden In The Wilderness: A Rose By Any Other Name Is Not As Sweet

To say my mom always had a green thumb would be a huge understatement.

This gift I did not inherit from her. I could kill a silk petunia.

Years ago I gave up trying to grow plants altogether. But, before that, about twice a year I used to take my plants to her, broken, brown and "dead". It seems like within a week, she'd call and say, "They're ready for you to pick them up". I'd go to her house to get them and they honestly would not even look like the same plants, they'd be healthy and green. Sometimes a flower would be blooming on a plant that I didn't even know would bloom. She would give me advice on how to care for them, but within no time I was back with them begging for more help. They looked dead again.

When I was a little girl, Mama had the most beautiful rose garden with roses of every color and variety and she could tell you about each one. I used to admire them all so much. I thought I was

like one of these roses. You see, Mama had named me Sharon and told me that it was from the Bible, The Rose of Sharon. I really thought that my name meant that I was like one of her roses in her beautiful garden. I used to brag to my little friends, "I'm a rose!"

As I became an adult, I didn't feel very much like a rose. Life kind of knocked me around a little bit. To reiterate this fact, I also learned that Sharon is not a rose at all. It's not even a weed, it's a barren desert. Yes, that's right, a barren desert where nothing grows, not even a briar or a cactus. Maybe that's one reason why plants never would grow for me, ya think?

You see, the Rose of Sharon is God. He is the beautiful rose that grows in the desert. He can take something bad in our lives and make it a beautiful work of art with His Grace and Mercy. We are only capable of beauty through Him.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Phil. 4:13

My mom passed away in March of this year. My nephew and her grandson, Austin, was the pastor that spoke at her funeral. She would have been so proud of him.

He talked about his Granny's gardening. He said he believed that she could give Adam a run for his money in the gardening department. When she got to heaven, he was sure after she worshipped God and praised Jesus and met her loved ones that she asked for a shovel to go to work in the beautiful flower gardens of heaven.

I can't imagine the beauty of those roses there. I know that my mom waits for us there in that beautiful city where the roses always bloom and God's Glory is the Light for all of eternity!

*Song of Soloman 2:1-2
I am the rose of Sharon and the lily
of the valleys. As the lily
among the thorns, so is my love
among the daughters.*



Titus 2 Wisdom for Women

When I think of a godly woman, Mrs. Verna Mae comes to mind. She's who

many of us would like to be when we grow up. She is a mother and grandmother, a Sunday School teacher, a mature woman of God. She had many wonderful years of marriage to her husband, James, before he passed away several years ago. We asked her to share some of her wealth of wisdom and secrets for a long and happy marriage.

Here are the points she shared.

1. First and foremost is to let Jesus Christ be first place in your heart, marriage, home and family. He is my strength and my helper. You know, the

Word of God lets us know—it's God first, family second, church third.

2. Forgive and forget. Don't bring it up again. Don't hold a grudge. Don't say I told you so.

3. Communicate. We tend to grow apart when we stop talking and listening to each other. Talk out your problems, discuss it, work it out before you go to bed at night. Anger festers the more you think and dwell on it. Many times I've also had to choose my words carefully. Words can hurt. Even when one says, "I'm sorry", the hurt is still there. Once words are spoken, they can't be taken back. One key is to brag on your spouse, don't ever put him down, especially in public. All men love

to be bragged on, don't they? Proverbs 25:11 says...A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pitchers of silver.

4. Seek God together. Another important thing is to read the Word of God together, pray together. Tough times come to all of us. Just always remember, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, suffered much more than any of us ever will. He did it all for us who will receive Him into our hearts (Praise Him for His love, tender mercy and marvelous grace!) He is our hope, our strength and our help in our marriages. Nothing is impossible with God!

Many miracles have come in my life because of answered prayer. Praise the Lord, He is still giving miracles today!

Titus 2 Wisdom for Women (Cont'd)

5. Hard Times. If we were always on the mountain top (no problems) and never in the valley, would we be as close to God? Sometimes God allows things to happen for our own good, to help us draw closer to Him and just trust Him.

6. Be Strong. A woman can be strong emotionally when she carries no selfish motives.

7. Clothing, physical and spiritual. A woman needs to take pride in herself.



My precious friend, has blessed my life by sharing her story with me of God's amazing grace.

She's agreed to share it with you at God's leading. I pray that you'll be as inspired as I was.

Lay It Down

The Lord laid something on my heart that is going to be excruciating for me. However difficult either way, I prefer to put it on paper rather than tell it. I am unsure what I am supposed to do when it is complete, but I *am* sure it will be one of the hardest things I have ever done.

I have kept some things bottled up tight, in the back of my mind, never to be spoken about or dealt with again! Forgotten, not allowing the past to affect me, or the way that I live my life. Or so I thought.

This is where my stroll down "I want to forget this memory Lane" began.

Our Pastor had a sermon that lasted several weeks, the theme, "Give It Up". The purpose, to find out what stands between you and your relationship with God. It didn't take a minute before it became clear to me what stood in the way of my relationship with the Lord. It was my insecurity. I needed to learn to like myself, despite being overweight and not very attractive. I knew it was going to be difficult, but was a willing participant, I wanted to please God! I told my husband what I thought I needed to do. I surrendered, laying my

Fix up for your man! What about those old worn out PJ's or gowns (like mine)? Buy something new and sexy. And, don't just focus on physical clothes, but spiritual clothes, like character, strength and dignity. Proverbs 31:30 says, Favor is deceitful, beauty is vain, but a woman who feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

Our relationship with God makes all the difference, depending on the sweet Holy Spirit to guide our words, thoughts and lifestyles.

insecurity down at the Altar.

If only it were that easy.

"You missed it", if I heard that once, I heard it a thousand times. I didn't understand, this was the first thing that came to my mind. I have quite a few bad habits, and, of them, this is what stood out! That had to be it! That is what stands in the way of my relationship with the Lord. It keeps me from doing His work, I am too uncomfortable to speak, meet new people or open up to family or friends.

He opened my eyes to what it really was -- yep, I missed it. Flat on my face, I pleaded "Lord please don't bring me back here".

For as long as I can remember, I have been extremely uncomfortable around people. Put me in a crowd of people that I know and I am out of my comfort zone--but put me in a crowd of people that I don't know and I am completely overwhelmed. One on one, I am fine, but around a lot of people and I am quiet, consumed by fear and intimidation. For those who don't know me, you may see me as "snobby" or stuck up. That couldn't be further from the truth.

Self-esteem or lack of it has been an issue for me since my teenage years. God has shown me that it isn't my outside that is the problem, but my inside. How much easier would it be for me to accept that I was overweight or not very pretty? After all, God would love me anyway.

In order for me to submit to God and the plan that He has for me, I must

8. Make time. Set aside some time together, get a babysitter, have a night out together.

9. It takes two. Marriage is a give-and-take lifetime together. It takes husband and wife both, one can't solve it all.

Lastly, it's important to remember that our marriage does reflect on our children. They hear more than we think. After all, we're teaching them about marriage too. Love, Mrs. Verna Mae

Testify to Grace...Lay It Down

This is the hardest part for me -- not letting go, but the way I have to let go. I have to tell my story!

first let go of a few demons, some which have tormented me since adolescence. This is the hardest part for me -- not letting go, but the way I have to let go. I have to tell my story!

Only prolonging the inevitable, I will get on with it.

Although my Dad and I have a great relationship now, it hasn't always been that way. Growing up in our house wasn't exactly an episode of the Cleavers, but then again, whose is? My dad was an alcoholic with a bad temper. Rarely at home and when he was, everyone walked on eggshells. There was lots of fighting and arguing between him and my mom. Over time, things got a little better. Then, I became a teenager ...

When I was fourteen, I was raped. This sent my life in a downward spiral, on a path of self-destruction. I was humiliated; my self respect, gone.

I started hanging out with older girls. Drinking, smoking cigarettes and marijuana became normal weekend activities.

I had a friend who liked to skip school. I had never done it; was always too scared to. Well, with little coercion, she was able to convince me to go, well, my parents found out. When I got home from school, my mom let me in on the fact that they knew and said those

Lay It Down...

words that we dreaded "just wait until your dad gets home". We weren't beaten as kids, but we got "whoopin's" -- we were afraid of Dad, he used intimidation to demand respect. He believed that fear was respect; you couldn't have one without the other.

I knew it was going to be bad. Dad came home early to punish me; he must have stewed about it all day because he had a good mad going by the time he got home. He came into my room and asked me to come sit down in the living room. No sooner did I sit down he began to hit me, closed fist. I lifted my knees and buried my head in my arms trying to cover my face, so he punched me in the side of the head, first one side then the other. This went on for what seemed like forever. I remember my mom sitting on the couch, doing nothing, saying nothing -- allowing this grown man to hit her 14-year-old daughter like he was fighting another man. Why wouldn't she do something, why wasn't she helping me? As if punching me wasn't punishment enough, he wanted to humiliate me. He started asking me really explicit questions about sex and calling me names; wh---, for example. Mom still just sitting there, not saying anything, not doing anything.

Amid his rage, and his embarrassing questions, I screamed as I told him about being raped. Still, I don't know if I told him to "release", or in hopes he would have compassion and stop hitting me. Either way, it didn't work. He didn't seem to care; it didn't faze him at all. I guess he was too intent on being angry with me to fully grasp what I had said. That was the first time I had spoken the words out loud and it would be the last for a LONG time.

I started sleeping with and "falling in love" with anyone who told me they loved me, was nice to me, or paid me attention. I wanted to be loved, accepted and needed so bad to feel like I was "somebody".

At 17, I met the man who is now my husband. Four months pregnant when I graduated High School, I couldn't wait to get out of my parents' house. So a few days after I turned eighteen we were married. My grandmother and grandfather were the only ones in my

family who bothered to show up to our wedding. My mom was too worried about being too young to be a grandmother; telling me "this isn't your only option", meaning I could have an abortion, and being mad at my husband because he was the "adult" (6 years older than me) and I was a "child", he should have known better than to get me pregnant. Because obviously, I had nothing to do with it, right?

Some would say our marriage was a disaster waiting to happen and honestly, I probably didn't disagree. I was begging for affection and his undivided attention, I needed to KNOW that he loved me--he had to prove it!

Soon after marrying, we began to fight - not argue, but fight. He had a bad temper and I would act like he didn't scare me-- I had had enough of men and how they had treated me, I wasn't about to let my husband "run over me" too. So if he got in my face, I would meet him halfway, if he hit me, I hit back ... I would hit first.

I was needy and co-dependent. I started fights, I fought back, I called names, and I cussed and yelled and screamed. I have been hit, held down, spit on, cussed at and called names. We have left some emotional scars on each other. It seemed that no matter where I went, I couldn't get away from dissension. My mother-in-law was diagnosed with "Borderline Personality Disorder" and she hated me! There was always a fight going on with her about one thing or another. She would put my husband down, put me down, this went on for probably 8 years of our now 15-year marriage. I would try so hard to prove to her that I wasn't the person that she thought I was. Helping her clean house, cooking dinner for her, sending her cards, whatever ... anything to prove to her that I wasn't the person she thought I was. It didn't work.

Whether it be my dad, husband, mother-in-law, a boss (man) who talked down to me in front of people or friends



God has an awesome plan for me, but in order for me to have the ability to carry out His perfect plan, I have to Let Go!

who only called me when they needed something, there was always someone making me feel inadequate, many of them being people who loved me? I had given all of myself, I had nothing else, reserving myself to the reality that I didn't deserve for anyone to be good to me. I became bitter, cold, numb and empty; I built my wall so no one else could get in and hurt me, determined that I was no longer going to take junk off of people, developing the attitude to make it happen.

Years of my "ain't taking no junk" mentality as well as being filled with resentment, anger and lingering feelings of nothingness, more miserable than ever, I wanted to die. Searching for fast, painless and guaranteed ways to get the job done, not seeming to find any that fit the criteria-- I began praying that the Lord would take me, just let me die. I was willing to leave my children; who I loved more than anything or anyone. I had no desire to live, not one more day. I was miserable, I needed peace.

No, I needed the Lord! In the moment that I gave my life to the Lord, peace like I have never felt enveloped me. Forgiving and loving others came easy--forgiving and loving myself, has proven to be my toughest challenge.

The Lord has brought me a long way and continues to do a work in me with a long way to go still. I have negative traits that stem from my experiences, I am shy, overly sensitive, withdrawn and I have trust and intimacy issues - but with those, came positive ones. I do not believe that I would be the humble, selfless person that I am now without experiencing life as I have. In many ways, I am a better person for what I have endured. Most importantly, I would not have had to rely on God's Grace and Mercy to sustain me nor learned to lean on Him.

The Lord is working in our whole family. My husband is now the man I have always dreamed he could be and our marriage is strong! God is still the miracle worker!

God has an awesome plan for me, but in order for me to have the ability to carry out His perfect plan, I have to Let Go!

Grace...Grace...Grace...

God reveals His greatness to me...right after I've shown an ungrateful heart.

...Grace...Grace...Grace...

A beautiful sunset breaks through the clouds...and encourages my broken heart.

...Grace...Grace...Grace...

He's faithful to me...when I'm not faithful to Him.

...Grace...Grace...Grace...

When I'm so unlovely ...He showers amazing love on me.

...Grace...Grace...Grace...

His grace falls on me...when my world is falling apart.

...Grace...Grace...Grace...

When I have no answers...He is the answer.

...Grace...Grace...Grace...

When I need a friend...what a friend I have in Jesus!

...Grace...Grace...Grace...

When we needed a loving Savior...His love saved us.

...Grace...Grace...Grace...

We had a debt we could not pay...He paid a debt He did not owe.

...Grace...Grace...Grace...

HIS GRACE IS AMAZING!

And, I am so unworthy.

When I'm cut off in traffic,

...Grace...uh...Grace...uh...Grace...

When I'm so late and my child has to potty making me later, and then my car won't start,



And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 1 Tim 1:14

...Grrrrr...ace...uhm...Grrrrr...ace...Grrrrrrrace...

When I'm craving a chili cheese-burger with lettuce, tomato, onion, mayo, mustard and pickles, and I arrive home to find out that the girl at the drive-through gave me a grilled chicken sandwich...plain,

....Grrrrr...Grrrrr...Grrrrrrrrr...

Well, let's just say... He is God and I am not! I want to be like Jesus. I have a long way to go. I'm so thankful He doesn't give up on me. Thank God for His amazing GRACE...GRACE...GRACE!

Adventures in Parenting...Home Alone (In a Camper)



Our family loves to go camping. Once when my son, Bradley, was two years old and my son, Taylor, was eight, we planned a Spring weekend camping trip to Lake Hartwell, about 45 minutes from our house. We took our travel trailer out to the campground on Thursday night to get things set up for the weekend. As I was off work the next day, we decided that Bradley and I would spend that night in the camper and, my husband, Scott and Taylor would come out the next day when they got out of school and work.

When the setup was complete, it was already dark and time for Scott and Taylor to head toward home. I walked them to the truck, kissed them and quickly headed the few steps back to the camper where Bradley was sitting inside playing on the floor. I reached for the door handle and froze when I realized that it was locked. Bradley was inside. I called to him through the door and he was giggling. Oh no, he had locked the door. I realized my cell phone was inside along with my car

keys and all our tools. In a single bound, I was out chasing after Scott's truck through the campground yelling and waving my arms like a wild woman. It was all to no avail. I watched the truck turn the corner and head out of sight. I looked around and there were no campers nearby and no other lights than that of our camper. It seemed there was no one there that night, just me and my little guy with a locked door between us. I didn't even have a flash light. I began to pray. I tried talking to Bradley through the door to explain how to unlock the door, but he wasn't understanding or interested in trying. He played for a while as I groped around in the darkness looking for anything that I could use to break into the camper. The windows and compartments were all secure.

Then it happened, his giggles turned to sobs and I stopped my mission to find a tool and started talking to him through the window trying to calm him. It wasn't working, before long I was crying too but trying not to let him know it. Then, I'll never forget, my little Bradley found a blanket and crawled up on the bench at the kitchen table. He continued to cry and then he put the blanket over

his head and body and started rocking back and forth. It broke my heart.

I knew I had to find a way in. I discovered a hammer sitting on a stump nearby. Maybe Scott had just happened to have left it out of his tools but I know it wasn't an accident. God knew I was going to need it and it was right there for me. I pried a window open just far enough for me to squeeze my arm through and reach across to unlock the back door of the camper. I raced in and grabbed my baby in my arms and I held him for a long time that night, it didn't take long for things to be better for both of us once we were reunited.

Isn't it just like that sometimes with our relationship with God? Sometimes we lock ourselves away from Him even though He's the only one who can help us. We try to deal with trials and crises on our own. We're like a crying child under a blanket rocking out and back trying to deal on our own. Wouldn't it be so much easier if we'd just let Him in and He could swoop us up into His arms and we could give our worries to Him?

Grace In The Wilderness

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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:

- 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. Please contact us for more information.

This is a free bi-monthly email newsletter. To be added to our distribution list for an electronic copy or to receive a paper copy, please just call or email us.



Big Girls Don't Cry! Yeah, Right!



Females are such emotional creatures. I'll be the first to admit that I'm a big "cry baby". We cry

when we're happy. We cry when we're sad. We cry when someone does something bad to us and when someone does something good for us.

Tears drip when our baby comes into the world and, again, when our parent leaves the world. We cry when we're mad, sad and glad, sometimes all at the same time. Sometimes we cry until we laugh and other times we laugh until we cry.

Love is the "quick trigger" for our tears. The more we love, the quicker we are brought to tears by the object of our affection. Tears come when our love is so much that it cannot be contained and it leaks out of our eyes. It's just too much for our human bodies.

We are created in God's image. Jesus wept. (John 11:35) We were created for relationship and God is all about relationships. If our love can become so

much that it leaks out of our eyes, imagine how much more love our Heavenly Father is capable of. He loves us so much that He gave His only Son to die for us.

John 3:16 For God so loved the World, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

I like to think that I love my neighbor, but I've never met anyone, absolutely anyone, that I'd give either one of my boys' left pinkies for. I can't even begin to comprehend that kind of love.

God knew you and I would need a Savior. He knew that when I was 9 years old, He was going to tug on my heart on a Sunday morning and ask to come inside and He hoped so much that I'd say "yes!". Maybe He even held His breath waiting for my answer. What a wonderful statement of humbleness from our Almighty God! How unimaginable that He would die for me then give me a choice about whether or not I wanted to even accept His gift. Now that's LOVE!

He cares about our tears too. Charles Swindoll has said "A teardrop on earth

summons the King of Heaven." God heard the cry of the children of Israel and, among other things, He parted the Sea to deliver them. They walked through on "dry" ground.

He heard Mary and Martha's cry and raised their brother, Lazarus, from the dead—four days after his death.

For those who accept Jesus as their Savior, one day there will be no more tears! Revelation 7:16-17 says "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

What a sweet promise! All that and the Bible says we'll have a new body too. Guess our skin just couldn't handle all the love and joy of Heaven without exploding!

Well, I'm pretty certain about one thing..... the new body won't come with tear ducts!

**LIVE YOUR LIFE IN SUCH A WAY THAT WHEN YOU OPEN YOUR EYES IN THE MORNING, SATAN SHUDDERS AND SAYS,
"OH NO, SHE'S AWAKE!!!"**