

moments

of Grace



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true stories of those touched
by *God's Grace*



Hedge of Grace

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"Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths" (Hosea 2:6 NASB).

"Lord, why am I lying here suffocating?" I asked as I lay bedridden, confined inside the four walls of my bedroom for six months. I felt like a child confined to my room. Breathing treatments awaited me every two hours to clear up my lungs. I felt like I received the death sentence. I knew I did something wrong, but I could not reason it out. "Lord, did I sin against You? Please show me; I want to be free."

Born a wild branch with the wayward name, Savage, I recognized a need for a Savior early in my life. I wanted salvation when I heard about the ever-burning fire of hell. I didn't like pain, and I certainly didn't want to live in affliction for eternity. The salvation message became clear right away with me at eleven years old because I wanted to avoid torture.

I despised my life growing up on the poor side of town with working parents. Even as a preteen, my parents expected me to clean house and prepare dinner for them and my

younger brother. I dreamed of an exciting life.

My parents sent me to church every Sunday on the church bus. One summer, I attended a church girls' camp in the mountains. In the piney woods, I met Jesus. In that place I sensed His unconditional acceptance, something foreign to me. I became His loved one, a daughter of the living God (Romans 9:25-26).

I still had wild sap running through my veins as a wild branch grafted into the olive tree. So as a teenager, I refused to attend church. I pursued the life I desired, not the life others required of me. I escaped my parents' confinement to seek the pleasures that weren't allowed in my home. I couldn't live up to my parents' expectations. I counted the days until I could move out of my father's house.

When I finally moved out, I worked two jobs. Looking for a place to party, I wandered around in a nearby city one night. When I returned home the next day, I stopped at a convenience store. At the checkout, the clerk said, "I'm sorry to hear about your dad."

"What?" I questioned.

"Your dad died last night. You don't know?"

"No, I don't!" I ran out the door, and I cried all the way to the hospital. For several years my dad wrestled with cancer, but lost his battle on the night I chose to seek my own plans. I ignored my family through Dad's illness because I wanted to be free. I knew I disappointed my father, so I had to find another way to pursue my plans.

After Dad's death, my friends disappeared. So I joined the U.S. Air Force, hoping for an exotic assignment to chase my dreams. Then it happened. A good-looking cowboy two-stepped his way into my heart. My heart danced and sang tunes with his music. Eldon captured my attention with his ingenuity. But my commitment to the Air Force boot camp controlled my destiny. After my basic training, Eldon and I eloped and transferred to

Del Rio, Texas. There, I faced my first culture shock, not the adventurous assignment of my dreams.

Captured by my husband's good looks, I failed to communicate with him about his goals and dreams in life. I expected him to go along with whatever I wanted to do. But he had other plans. And I started to feel penned in again by my frustrations.

Trapped in South Texas with no way out, I sought another escape. I started my college education, but my first baby arrived. My classes left little time for my family. I earned a few credit hours before I eventually quit, focusing on my family. Again, my plans were frustrated.

I tried to run again, requesting transfers with the Air Force. But time and time again, my plans failed. And with each failed attempt, scratches from the thorns scarred my soul. I could not escape through the hedge of thorns, but I kept trying. Every direction I turned left me more spiritually and emotionally battered.

Finally, I shifted the blame of my failure to my husband. Stuck in a dead-end town with my dreams shattered, the seeds of resentment took root in the soil of my broken soul. Angry flames lashed out to those I loved the most—my family.

With all the obstructions, I decided to return to the place I met my Lord—in church. Though I returned to Christ, I longed for a way to escape to achieve my own way. I found a hole in the hedge as I attempted another way to fulfill my plans.

A mother of two at this point, I wanted to stay at home with my children. I despised leaving my infant in daycare. My heart cried louder than my baby cried when I left him in the arms of another. I signed up with work-at-home companies, but these programs did not work for me. The deficits were larger than the profits, eventually driving my family into a mountain of debt. Eldon disagreed with my plan to get rich quick through network marketing programs. Therefore, I blamed him for my failure. More resentment and bitterness grew from this failure. I worked

for civil service five more years before paying off the debts that I ran up on the credit cards. My plans failed again.

Diagnosed with acute bronchitis, on the brink of pneumonia, I lay in bed for two months. Trapped within the walls of my bedroom, the Lord penned me up like a wild sheep.

Suffocating, I wished I had never been born. Self-pity controlled my thoughts. Because of my anger and verbal abuse, Eldon cautioned my friends who visited, "I have to warn you now, she's not herself."

Finally, I sought the Lord about my illness. I don't believe all illnesses come upon people due to sin. Job, a righteous man, experienced inflection.

Heaviness suffocated me. Trying to focus on ways to ease the pain, I wanted to hold my breath. But my efforts were fruitless.

"Lord, what is happening to me? If I've been so bad to deserve the death sentence, please take me now." He refused.

I woke up in between treatments with no energy to move, crying, "Lord, what have I done?"

In my quiet room inside my spirit I heard the still voice: *Stop blaming your husband. It's not his fault. I allowed you to go through all those situations. I wanted you to seek Me.*

All the scenes of my past played like movies in my mind, as if the Lord were walking me step-by-step. "Lord, I'm sorry I blamed Eldon. Please forgive me."

Peace and contentment poured over me as the strangling mucus loosened from my lungs. I felt truly free for the first time in my life, as I stopped seeking a way of escape and sought the One who sets us free.

His grace walled me in, so I could be protected, and I sought Him. I learned a wild branch can be tamed by His grace by abiding in the vine. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5 NIV).

Now, I experience contentment more than ever. I belong to

God. Though I was prone to wander from Him, He promised to never leave me. By His grace, He frustrated my plans in order that I may turn to Him. After twenty years of marriage to the same man, one grown child and one child at home, I am so thankful for the Lord's hedge of grace in the circumstances that drew me closer to Him.

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