

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18).

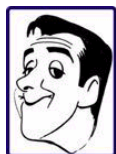
I love to testify of grace through this newsletter, not because it is one way God reveals Himself, but because grace is *THE* full revelation of God. We can know *about* God's character through explanations of the Law by Moses and the prophets. We can know *about* God the Creator by examining creation. However, John 1:18 says that no one has seen God in His fullness, except Jesus the Son of God, who came to reveal God to us. And how does Jesus reveal God? By grace! John 1:16 says, "*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.*" Grace is the life of God received, not the knowledge of God learned.

My opportunities to minister grace to precious people continue to increase. It is amazing to witness healing and transformation in 100% of the people who receive grace. There is not one issue in life that grace cannot address. Some people, like I once was, do not appear willing to receive grace. These people feel that they still have some control of their lives. And that's ok. I believe seeds of grace can be planted in the hearts of those people, as well as in my heart. And in God's timing, He will bring forth fruit full of life through those seeds. I hope the following testimonies and *A Tale of Two Mirrors* on the back will be seeds of grace.

GRACE AT WORK

I spent 18 days in January away from home working 12++ hours a day at a construction site. I assisted a gracious construction manager in expediting the completion of a wastewater treatment plant, and I helped start up the plant and train the operators. The customer was demanding. I needed grace for endurance and wisdom and hope. And Joy, too, needed the same grace as she was alone at home those 18 days. And through that time, I believe we experienced the grace of God in growing ways. This is why these newsletters are not simply my writings on the *topic of grace*, but my *testimony of grace* from the details of life.

One day while outside in a cold rain at the construction site, I received a cell phone call from Florence, one of several friends with whom I minister grace to the boys at the Boys Home of the South. She said, "I'm calling real quick just to make your day. Four of our younger boys came to us after chapel this week to tell us they wanted to know Jesus in a personal way." My body was chilled that day, but my heart was warmed by the miracle of grace received by the boys, and by the grace of that phone call.



30 years ago, Jim "Gomer Pyle" Nabors donated money for a chapel at the Boys Home of the South. I recently sent Mr. Nabors an email describing how his gracious donation is still producing fruit in the lives of the boys. His assistant replied with this email, "Dear Mr. Gibbons, Mr. Nabors wanted to thank you for your lovely message and to send his best to you and to the boys. Many thanks again for writing. Judy Murata." It was neat to tell the boys that "Gomer says hey!" You can view and add postings to his Guestbook at www.jimnabors.com.

Tax-deductible donations can be made to the Boys Home of the South, 10612 Augusta Road, Belton, SC 29627

GRACE ON VACATION

For my 25-year service award, my employer sent me and Joy on a Colorado vacation for the other 12 days in January. Joy was so excited to go; I was unsure she could endure the trip. But she did, and we had a wonderful time. It was a miracle to watch her enjoy snowshoeing, hot air ballooning, snowmobiling all by ourselves over 1000s of acres, dogsledding, and sleigh riding in a forest under a full moon. All this after nearly 3 years of being home bound! Joy still has a long way to go for consistent stamina. And I need to be careful to add that if Joy had not been able to make this trip, God's grace would not have been diminished at all. God's grace is distorted when viewed through circumstances. That's a focus of what's happening TO ME - good or bad. That's death in disguise. God's grace is received when viewed through trust in the indwelling Christ alone. That's a focus of what's happening IN ME no matter what is happening around me. And that's life at its fullest.



Next Grace Life Conferences: March 4-5 in Hendersonville, NC April 8-9 in Simpsonville, SC

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A Tale of Two Mirrors

An imaginative tale by Gregg Gibbons full of truth.

With gratitude to my grandmother, my mother, and a New York Yankee ball player...my first witnesses of the mirror of grace.

I was born with a mirror. Everyone is born with a mirror. A burden to carry. A burden to maintain.
I used to spend countless hours practicing before my mirror so that I could perform well for people, and, yes, even for God.
But my mirror would constantly become grimy, similar to a car windshield. It was frustrating to strain to keep my mirror clean.
I added ornate designs to the frame of my mirror. I tried to make my mirror look better than most other people's mirrors.
Yet, no matter what a person's mirror looked like, I discovered that everyone had to constantly clean their own mirrors.
Then I noticed a few people who did not seem to have the burden of my type of mirror. They were witnesses to me of a simple mirror.
These witnesses gracefully looked THROUGH their mirrors at people and circumstances. However, I strained to look INTO my mirror before looking at people and circumstances...a constant and awkward struggling of looking back and forth.
I couldn't explain it, but I knew the mirrors of these witnesses were blessings, whereas my mirror was an increasing burden.
Oh, how I despaired. Oh, how I wanted a simple mirror like these few witnesses.
My despair continued to increase and my mirror became so heavy, until...
...until I caught a glimpse of light reflected from someone's simple mirror, a glorious light that penetrated my heart...
...and I know now it was the light of Life Himself, Jesus! Immediately my lifelong tight grip on my mirror released and my mirror fell to the ground. I was so exasperated that I released everything in me and also fell to the ground.
As I fell, I sensed the embracing arms of God. The burden of my soul...it was finally gone.
I don't know how long I was out on the ground...but something tells me it was for three days and three nights.
When I came to, I was able to slowly stand up only to discover I had received a mirror just like the mirror of the witnesses!
My new mirror was lighter than I ever imagined. And I did not have to grasp this new mirror...it was somehow part of me!
And it was so clean...but surely it would eventually need cleaning.
Even though my new mirror did not yet need cleaning, I still tried different things to dress up the frame out of habit.
After trying everything to dress up the frame, one day I sought to clean the mirror. Surely the mirror needed cleaning by now.
So, I peered into my mirror, saw my reflection, and reached to clean the surface of the mirror...and to my amazement...
...to my utter amazement, the mirror had no surface, nothing to separate me from my reflection, and...
...and I...I...I touched the face in the mirror! It was then when I realized I had touched the very face of Jesus!
Startled, I jerked my hand back. But I was drawn to reach out again to touch His face. A sweet boldness I had never known.
Oh, His face...so strong, yet tender...so seasoned, yet so soft...so warm...so vibrant. Oh what a precious touch!
Then I realized His nail-scarred hand tenderly touching my face! A warm touch...a gentle pat...a sure support as I leaned my head into the palm of His hand.
Tears of joy streamed down my face. And tears of joy streamed down His face. Somehow I knew they were the same tears.
As He tenderly wiped our tears, I saw His accepting smile. I humbly smiled, too. I will never be the same.
I will always gaze into my mirror of grace. There is so much more for me and others to see of His hope and glory!

Epilog

That old burdensome mirror? Oh, it's still hanging around me...I just no longer have to grasp it. It's no longer a part of me. I am still tempted from time to time to keep the old mirror clean, but I know now that Jesus came to set me free from that.

At first, I tried to balance my attention between both mirrors, because I perceived the two mirrors as the doctrines of Law and Grace. But after I touched the face of Grace, I knew Grace is not a doctrine to believe and to balance, but a Person to love and to cherish.

Some people now misunderstand my freedom to be license, and my joy and peace to be naively unrealistic. That's ok. I don't really understand it myself. ☺ I am perfectly content to reflect my true heart, and to be another witness of God's mirror of grace.

I hope this tale encourages you to hear the words of Jesus in *Matthew 11:30, Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy burden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

And I hope *2 Corinthians 3:18* is, or will become, the foundation for your life, *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*