



Believing for a Miracle

Our Journey of Faith, Miracles,
and the Healing of Cancer

H o l l y M u r r a y

The Creativity of Grace

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, righteously, and in godliness in this present world, as we await the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and purify for Himself a special people, zealous of good works. Teach these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority.

Let no one despise you.

Titus 2:11-15 (MEV)

God is so ultimately creative. He can choose to resolve a problem in a way that you would never have believed possible - in a way that you have never even heard of before. Whether your life seems relatively simple and everything is progressing as smoothly as a boat glides across a serene and peaceful lake, or things couldn't be more tumultuous; God's beautiful, creative gift of grace is available for you to receive.

My life was running fairly smoothly. Any problems I faced were so miniscule in comparison to what I heard others discussing as commonplace. In fact, I'd always believed I didn't have much of a testimony at all. Nothing very dramatic had ever happened in my life. I didn't have the depth of understanding when I was younger to realize that it was the very grace of God that was at work in my life that empowered me to make Godly choices that kept me from teetering on the edge of a rocky cliff.

*For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows grace and favor and honor; no good thing will He withhold from those
who walk uprightly.*

Psalms 84:11 (AMP)

My Life

My husband Keith and I had been happily married 15 years. We had two beautiful sons, Caleb and Joshua, who were three years apart in age. Caleb is the eldest. He tends to be my quiet child until he wants to really tell you about something. At that point, you might as well kick back

because it's going to be a while before you get a word in edgewise. Joshua has the personality of his dad. Like Keith, he is the life of the party – friendly, chatty, and full of life.

I was in my eighth year of teaching in an elementary school classroom. I had been teacher of the year at my school the previous year. This year, I was grade chair for all of the first-grade teachers. I considered this both an honor and a privilege. I enjoyed the time we spent together planning and discussing ways we could better serve the students in our care in the meetings held in my classroom after school.

Keith and I had prayed about and decided to pull our two sons out of public school that year and to enroll them in an online public school. Doing so would enable Keith to oversee their work at home since most of his insurance business he could operate from behind his desk in the office located beside our house. I had homeschooled them myself for three years, including the time during which I was working on my Master's degree, so that wouldn't be too difficult for my husband to do, right?

Everything seemed to be going as planned. I was a highly successful educator who absolutely loved being in the classroom. I had conquered my fear of having adults in my classroom by inviting adults in my classroom - I had parent volunteers scheduled in my room every week and we were all enjoying the benefits of their involvement. My students were thriving, scores were incredible, my evaluations were outstanding, and I was making a difference doing what I loved.

Sure, I worked crazy-long hours. The custodial staff ran me out of my classroom nearly every evening so they could lock up the building, and my car was often the last one in the parking lot. I'd come home, throw something together for dinner (if my husband didn't already have it waiting for me - which he often did), and then go hole up in the bedroom with stacks of papers to grade, lesson plans to write, or items to create that would keep my classroom running beautifully and my students engaged the following day.

My weekends were spent cleaning house, catching up on laundry, and working on stuff for school. It had been this way every year I taught, except now I had two children of my own at home. I hated the feeling that I was neglecting my family. Surely I was fulfilling my calling, however, loving on all of these precious first graders every day and encouraging and laughing with those whom I had the privilege to call my colleagues. Keith was the role-model father, helping teach our boys, training them, encouraging them, loving on them. This was my life.

We were working together toward everything we felt was important. We were involved at church serving in the music ministry every Sunday. The children were involved in the youth group, and I attended a weekly ladies' group. We were living a very fulfilling, albeit busy life. Often, however, our perspective of the ideal life may look like a pretty picture but be far from the masterpiece God wants to create for us.

God, the creator of all wonderful things, has a plan that far exceeds the limitations of our best imaginings. He alone knows how to mold each experience of our life into something beautiful, even if the experience is less than pleasant. My favorite Scripture reads, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV) This verse had become life to me earlier in my journey to parenthood and would be one that would become life to me once again.

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Our Beach Trip

A few days before the 2011 school year began, Keith surprised the boys and me with an impromptu beach trip. I love the beach. It’s my favorite place in the entire world. I love the sound of the waves crashing on the shore and the salt-scented wind blowing my hair in wisps around my face. I love the sun beating down - warming every inch of me, and the seagulls flying around looking for anyone who might want to give them a piece of their bread crust. I love the feel of scrubbing my toes along the ocean floor looking for sand dollars, finding the perfect shells, and watching toddlers knock down castles their fathers have patiently and time-consumingly built. I like to feel the watery sand drizzle down my fingers as I watch a tower of sand build beneath my fingers while I sit just beyond the reach of the surf – knowing in a matter of a few minutes, the tide will come in and wash away what I have built. It becomes a joyful race to see how tall I can make the tower before the waves cause it to melt back into the shore again.

These reasons and so many more make the beach my favorite travel destination. My husband knows this. He loves the crisp air of the mountains in the fall, but he takes me to the beach because he loves me and wants to do whatever he can to keep me his happy, bubbly wife. How sweet is that kind of love?

Our beach trip was lovely in every way. We had friends who had been on vacation in Jacksonville and ended up in a hospital room there hours away from home, family, and friends. Their precious brown-haired daughter had just received an unexpected diagnosis of diabetes while they were on their trip. We chose Jacksonville as our beach destination so that we could visit them in the hospital.

Keith thinks of things like that, and I love that about him. Me, I know when something is the right thing for us to do because when he mentions it, I get this overwhelming sense of peace that makes me want to cry for joy. My pastor has at times referred to this “sixth sense” as one of God’s gifts to women to which their husbands would be wise to be attentive. Keith is quite

respectful of my sensitivities, so we were both feeling sure that Jacksonville was the destination that God had in mind for our trip.

*Bear one another's burdens,
and so fulfill the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:2 (ESV)*

We spent some time with our friends in that hospital room, encouraging them. I remember being so proud of my own two patient children, giving up a portion of a family trip without argument or complaint to love on dear friends from church. We spent time in that room entertaining and being entertained by hearty conversation about how God was moving even in a difficult situation and how He had come through with provision. We even shared some laughter together over old times we'd had as we watched the children play around us. The comradery we felt made the tiny room seem so much larger than the reality.

It feels good to encourage the people we love, to know that we leave them in better condition than we found them. We left the hospital, feeling at peace with the prayers we prayed and consolation we'd given, and enjoyed a remarkably fun couple of days at the beach before heading home in time for the new school year to begin.

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It was in the car on that long drive home from the beach that our eleven-year-old son, Caleb, pointed out a rather pink-looking bumpy rash that had developed in a line on his left leg. It began from a spot just above his ankle and circled up behind his knee. After a few days, we noticed that the rash had not gone away, and we made an appointment with his doctor, who also happened to be a dear friend to our family. Caleb's doctor looked at it, and prescribed a cream to treat the rash. It didn't take long for his skin to clear up, but Caleb began to have a lot of pain in his left calf. It seemed to come and go - sometimes we would watch him limp down the stairs or pause and grab his leg when he was running through the grass in the field in front of our house.

We thought the pain might be related to the rash, and one afternoon the pain was so severe that Keith took Caleb to the ER while I stayed home with his younger brother. After an examination, the doctor felt that the pain Caleb was experiencing was not related to the rash, but likely growing pains based on his age and a recent growth spurt. Our family physician and good

friend had recommended that an x-ray be performed, but the emergency room doctor believed that measure to be unnecessary, so Keith and Caleb returned home.

An Unexpected Trip

Two weeks later, on October 2, 2011, we were on our way to church. A typical Sunday morning for us has me waking to the most annoying sounds my phone can possibly offer at 5:30, with the goal set to be on the road by 6:30. This is no small feat, and much to my husband's chagrin, I often fall a bit short of the mark. It takes a bit of preparation the night before going anywhere for those of us who struggle in the art of decision making. I have developed that struggle to a fine art and will go to great lengths to avoid making decisions that affect others! It also takes a great deal of preparation to prevent the last-minute frantically asked questions like, "Where's my right shoe?" "Has anyone seen my belt?" "Do you have the deodorant?" so typical for my boys. But with a bit of hustling we manage to make it to church in time for vocal warm-up each week.

This particular Sunday morning was a little different, however. It began with a relatively quiet 45-minute drive to church. Each of my two young boys was undoubtedly occupied with his thoughts or buried in an electronic device of his choosing, while Keith and I listened to the inspiring music that would be played that morning in service. We had no idea that this quiet trip to church would be the start of the most difficult journey we have faced together.

Shortly before we arrived at church, we noticed Caleb crying in the backseat. He had been in a good bit of pain over the last few days, and nothing we had tried had proven to alleviate the pain as we helplessly watched him limp from place to place. His silent tears this Sunday morning, however, as he tried his best to endure the pain he was in, spurred us to action. Like his mom, he is one who hates to cry and prefers the "suffer in silence" train of thought. Knowing this made the fall of tears more alarming to us both.

Keith decided that we would go straight to the hospital ER in the hope of finding a solution to our son's pain. As my mind tried to wrap itself around all that I was seeing and hearing that morning, I told Keith that I felt it would be best if I dropped Joshua and him off at church and then take Caleb to the emergency room myself. I was fairly certain that there would be a long, miserable wait followed by a simple prescription that would solve the problem, and none of that would be improved by having all three of us waiting with Caleb. Besides, Keith was the band director at church, and his responsibilities and role were important. Keith agreed and we put the hastily laid plan to action.

The Plan

Have you ever had a moment when you thought you were strong enough to do something by yourself, or at least that you should be strong enough to do it? This was one of those moments for me. It seemed like it would be a series of fairly simple tasks. Drop Keith and Joshua off, enter the address of the hospital into my favorite GPS map, follow the step-by-step directions, and tell the doctors my son has been dealing with leg pain. Simple. I had no idea about the extent of grace that God was about to place in my possession. But God knew. He knew exactly how much grace I was going to require before I was aware that it would be needed.

Grace - that unearned gift of unmerited favor that empowers us to do and be all God has called us to be. That Sunday morning, God would gift me with the grace to keep my emotions in check as I received life-changing news while I sat stoically in the presence of my eleven-year-old in that tiny yellow confining room in the middle section of the ER.

God knows how much grace will be required of you before you are even aware that you will need any grace at all.

All during the sermon of the first service at church, Keith repeatedly checked his phone for a message on Caleb's progress. Undoubtedly, he wondered when he would hear from me. Many questions ran through his mind. When would I be back at church? Would I make it in time to sit beside him after the music at 11:00, as was our tradition? Did the doctors find the problem and have a solution in mind? Was Caleb okay? But these unasked questions were all left unanswered and he left his phone on the church seat to head to the platform and play during the altar time at the close of the first service.

After the first service, he headed with some of our friends to get the usual cup of steaming black coffee between services in the church gym. I always cherished that hour long break after the first service and before the second. It was a special time in which I was able to share my favorite drink with some of my nearest and dearest friends and discuss the interesting tidbits that were going on in our lives. There is really something special about Godly alliances. God creates people uniquely, and the resulting friendship becomes the beautiful golden thread that binds two completely different cuts of cloth in such a resplendent and remarkable way. Only such a loving Creator would design friendships this way, and we were blessed with some very special friends.

*Friendship is the golden thread
that binds two completely different cuts of cloth
in such a remarkably beautiful fashion.*

Settled in a chair surrounded by some of the people we love most in the world, Keith looked down at his phone to check for messages. The first one he saw was from me. It read, “Get down here now.” Five remaining, closely-sent messages gave him the horrifying news that the doctors had found a growth on our son’s leg. One of our best friends was sitting beside him as he read the messages, one after another, and she watched his expressions change. She was well aware that Keith was awaiting an update from me. I have no idea what she was thinking as she was looking at him, or if she has any idea how much her quick response to what she saw has meant to our family. She reached in her purse, grabbed her keys, handed them to Keith, and told him to take her car. Keith quickly located Joshua and drove faster than he probably should have to be by our side at the hospital as our life completely changed course.

I waited for my hero to come rescue me.

*But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you,
for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”
Therefore, most gladly I will boast in my weaknesses,
that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
2 Corinthians 12:9 (MEV)*

Order the novel, *Believing for a Miracle*, on [Amazon in paperback or Kindle versions](#).

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