

FOREWORD BY LAUREN CHANDLER

Glimpses of Grace

*Treasuring the Gospel
in Your Home*

GLORIA FURMAN

“I know no one who is leveraging her everyday life more for the glory of God than Gloria Furman. I want to learn about God and grace from people who live it and fight to do so. I’ve seen my friend do both beautifully. Gloria has taken the bigness of God and laid him into the cracks of the mundane, and somehow the mundane starts to feel big.”

Jennie Allen, author, *Stuck: The Places We Get Stuck and the God Who Sets Us Free*

“This is sustaining grace, this is the desired haven: to know his steadfast love that saves and keeps us. *Glimpses of Grace* is not a how-to. It is a true friend’s invitation to see and know the Lord’s steadfast love displayed in every wave, big and small. Gloria offers encouragement rooted in her personal experience and wisdom from saints who have weathered the storms decades and even centuries before us. May you catch glimpses of the Lord’s steadfast love and find an anchor for your soul.”

Lauren Chandler, writer; speaker; singer; wife of Matt Chandler,
The Village Church, Flower Mound, Texas

“Gloria is real! She’s going to tell you about the smell of her kitchen floor and the steadfast love of her Savior. Jonathan Edwards is right in there with peanut butter sandwiches and sprinkles. The grace this book shows us is no vague idea; it’s the biblical gospel infusing the stuff of life—the daily life of a homemaker. Strongly, humbly, and winsomely, this book calls homemakers (and all of us) to walk in faith, connecting with the visible and the invisible.”

Kathleen B. Nielson, Director of Women’s Initiatives,
The Gospel Coalition

“*Glimpses of Grace* is a beautiful picture of what it looks like to see Jesus Christ every day in every circumstance. Our friend Gloria takes the glories of Christ’s life and opens our eyes to their realities in the seemingly mundane circumstances of our lives. She builds a longing to know more of God and to believe that he is present in all of our work as mothers and wives. Her passion for missions and joy in God is contagious. We are excited to recommend this book to anybody wanting to see the ultimate reality of satisfaction in Christ alone for every day of your life.”

Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jessica Thompson, authors,
Give Them Grace

“We need gospel fuel to joyfully serve our families, and that’s what *Glimpses of Grace* provides. Many days I unload a barrage of law upon my family, when what they need from me is grace, encouragement, and reminders of God’s faithfulness. I thank the Lord for using Gloria to point me to the glorious gospel of his grace so that I might extend the same grace to my husband and children. As homemakers we can be smothered by the ordinary, blinded by the mundane, living in a fog of routine and fatigue, unable to see how to clean messy noses or break up sibling squabbles for the glory of God. In *Glimpses of Grace* Gloria helps to lift the fog by showing us how the gospel can change our perspective as we serve and love our families.”

Kristie Anyabwile, homemaker; mom; wife of
Thabiti Anyabwile, First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman

“Every homemaker, every mother, every woman, has experienced the disconnect between what she knows and what she feels, between knowing that what she is doing is good and the reality that it is exasperating and seems unfulfilling. In *Glimpses of Grace* Gloria Furman brings the gospel to bear on a woman’s distinct calling. With precision and grace she shows that the good news of all that Jesus Christ accomplished, when properly understood and carefully applied, will transform the way a woman carries out the task the Lord has given her.”

Aileen Challies and Tim Challies, author, *Disciplines of Spiritual Discernment*; blogger, challies.com

Glimpses of Grace: Treasuring the Gospel in Your Home

Copyright © 2013 by Gloria C. Furman

Published by Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Cover design: Crystal Courtney

First printing 2013

Printed in the United States of America

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®*), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, 2011 Text Edition. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-3605-2

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-3606-9

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-3607-6

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-3608-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Furman, Gloria, 1980-

Glimpses of grace : treasuring the gospel in your home /
Gloria Furman ; foreword by Lauren Chandler.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4335-3605-2

1. Grace (Theology) 2. Families—Religious life.

3. Home—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BT761.3.F87 2013

248.4—dc23

2012050930

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Foreword <i>by Lauren Chandler</i>	11
Acknowledgments	13
Introduction	15

Part 1

Your Foundation in the Mundane

1 Today's Forecast: Mundane with a 100 Percent Chance of Miraculous	25
2 Don't Smurf the Gospel	35
3 The Power of Parables	51
4 Christ in You, the Hope of Glory	63

Part 2

The Miraculous in the Mundane

5 Divine Power and Precious Promises for the 2 a.m. Feeding	75
6 The Bread of Life and Bagels for Breakfast	87
7 All Grace and All Sufficiency for Every Dinner Guest	99
8 He Washes Us White as Snow	109
9 God's Abiding Presence in Our Pain	125
10 United with Christ but Lonely for Friends	137
11 Treasure in Jars of Clay, Not in Fine Bone China	149
12 The Idol of a Picture-Perfect Home	159
13 Does Contentment in Christ Come with a Nap?	169

Conclusion: God Wants to Give You Himself	179
Notes	181
General Index	184
Scripture Index	189

Foreword



When you're drowning, the last thing you need is a tutorial on five easy steps to swim like a fish. What you need, what you're utterly desperate for, is something that will keep you afloat. Something that you can grab onto and not let go. Something that doesn't need you to sustain it, but rather something that can bear the full weight of your desperation.

Overwhelming waves and deep waters can come in every shape and depth imaginable: a newborn baby, the loss of a job, a chronic illness, a move, a change in a friendship, terminal cancer, a wrestle with your faith, the death of a loved one, a new chapter of parenting, a season of singleness beyond what you'd imagined, more responsibility heaped on a plate already a mile high and even the bleak prospect of what seems to be decades of the mundane—endless loads of laundry, dirty dishes, dust-bunnied floors, and leaky faucet noses. All the places in which you feel in over your head.

Our human tendency is to ask, what steps do I need to take either to make this work or to make this go away? The proof is in the pages—web pages on how to make one's self marketable (to a lifeless job market or to the dating people market). Books of pages line shelves in the local bookstore on what to eat to beat cancer, how to grieve a loss, how to make good kids, how to grow your own garden, raise your own chickens, sew your own clothes, feather your nest with flea market finds refurbished (by you, thanks to

Pinterest), homeschool your kids, create a blog about it, and still have dinner steaming on the table when your husband gets home.

We do well to seek advice. This is wisdom. But there's something to being at your wits' end that begs for more than instruction. Psalm 107 illustrates a season in the storm. Men in ships doing business on great waters are literally struck by a tempest. Scripture says, "They reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end" (v. 27). Their response to being completely helpless was to cry out to the Lord. No how-tos, no cute preservers, but just an honest and urgent plea to be delivered from a situation that was more than they could navigate. What did the Lord do on their behalf? He showed them his steadfast love. He calmed the waters, hushed the sea, and brought them to their desired haven.

This is sustaining grace, this is the desired haven: to know his steadfast love that saves and keeps us. *Glimpses of Grace* is not a how-to. It is a true friend's invitation to see and know the Lord's steadfast love displayed in every wave, big and small. Gloria offers encouragement rooted in her personal experience and wisdom from saints who have weathered the storms decades and even centuries before us. May you catch glimpses of his steadfast love and find an anchor for your soul.

Lauren Chandler

Acknowledgments



Aliza, Norah, and Judson, this book would be quite dull and would have fewer pages without your precious personalities.

I'm thankful for the encouragement from the online community at the *Domestic Kingdom blog* and from *Collin Hansen* and *Tony Reinke*. I'm also grateful that my catalyzing friend *Jennie Allen* convinced me to try writing something longer than a blog post. A huge thank you goes to *Justin Taylor* and *Lydia Brownback* and the people at *Crossway*.

My brothers and sisters in Christ at *Redeemer Church of Dubai* prayed for me and sweet sisters gave me their time and practical help so I could work on this book: *Sarah Wilson, Sarah Lawrence, Laura Davies, and Kanta Marchandani*. *Don and Becky*, thank you for hosting my talkative baby and me for two writing retreats and for not being frustrated that I left coffee cups all over your house and goldfish crackers under the bed.

When *Kevin and Katie Cawley* selflessly gave me their copy of Milton Vincent's *A Gospel Primer for Christians* right off of their coffee table, I had no idea just how true their bold recommendation would be. That book really did change my life. *Samantha Muthiah*, thank you for getting me a copy of *Staci Eastin's The Organized Heart* and for all the subsequent conversations about gospel centrality that followed.

Jeremiah Burroughs and *Richard Sibbes* left a legacy of hope in the resurrection that has served to spur me on to live in the light

Acknowledgments

that overwhelmed the grave. It's also hard to quantify the impact that the ministries of *John Piper*, *D. A. Carson*, and *Paul Tripp* have had on me.

A constant encourager for this work from start to finish was *my husband, Dave*. He knew how much I needed to write for the good of my own soul and he made sacrifices to make it happen. Thank you!

Introduction



In the first draft of this introduction I wrote, “I want to flesh out the practical implications of the gospel in everyday life.”

Then the thought occurred to me that I have never “fleshed out” anything before. I’ve only ever *de*-fleshed things—like rotisserie chickens and Thanksgiving turkeys.

The other metaphors I was reaching for weren’t working, either. I blamed the writer’s block on my mommy brain. Then it hit me.

Introductions are like the “why” question, which is a question that I answer all day long.

Funny enough, today’s big “why” dialogue was about cooking chicken. I have two daughters of preschool age, and they were watching me make chicken nuggets and boil pasta. One of them declared, “I want to cook, too. Give me the knife, Mommy!” She’s not even five years old; she cannot be trusted to wield a knife.

I began to reason with her, “You aren’t responsible enough to handle this big knife.”

Why? (Here we go.)

“Because it’s a heavy, sharp knife and it’s dangerous. You could cut yourself.”

Why? “Because you’re so little and small, and only big adults can handle knives like this.”

All right, then I’ll boil the noodles. “I don’t want you to touch the stove top, either.”

Why? “Because you aren’t mature enough to use the gas and lighter properly.”

Why? “Because they’re very tricky to work, even for Mommy.”

But I can do tricky things. I can unclip my car seat and I can count to one hundred—when you help me. “Sorry, Kiddo, you’re still not qualified to cook with fire yet.”

Why? [Sigh.]

This dialogue makes sense when you’re talking to a preschooler about the dangers in a kitchen. But sometimes we think of theology in this way. We think it’s too dangerous, too tricky, and we don’t feel confident that we’re qualified to handle it. We feel we should leave the work of theology to professors, pastors, and Sunday school teachers.

Besides, what does theology have to do with homemaking and things that everybody does, regardless of their faith?

Even despite our reservations and suppositions, all of us handle theology every day. We can’t help but theologize! The fact that everybody does mundane things, regardless of their religion, is another reason that we ought to consider what makes the way we live distinctly Christian.

We live in God’s world, we’re made in God’s image, and we interact with other people who have eternal souls. That makes theology vastly important and immensely life changing in our everyday mundane.

Theology is for homemakers who need to know who God is, who they are, and what this mundane life is all about.

That’s why I wrote this book.

As homemakers who are made in God’s image and desire to live for God, we need to know what God’s intentions are for us and for the work we do in the home.

More specifically, we need to know: What does the gospel have to do with our everyday lives in the home? How does the gospel impact our dish washing, floor mopping, bill paying, friend making, guest hosting, and dinner cooking?

How does the fact that Jesus himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24) make a difference in my mundane life today?

Where do we get our spiritual direction from? Should we follow our hearts or trust our guts? Do whatever best-selling books at the moment contain the secret to the good life? Is the answer to simply live in the moment, stopping to smell the fabric softener every once in awhile?

There are a lot of half-baked spiritual ideas that masquerade as Christian theology. How can we tell the difference? This book is not so much a critique of these philosophies but a description of the distinctly Christian hope of God's glory and how it relates to the home.

God's Word, the Bible, says that we were created for God to live for God's glory. With all that is in me, that's what I want for my life. I know the "created for him" part is already done (since I'm already alive). The part that's left—*living for him*—that's what I need help with. This morning, this afternoon, this evening, and in the middle of the night when I'm up with the baby, I want to know how I am a partaker of God's promises in Christ through the gospel (Eph. 3:6).

Ordinary life in my home is often far from boring. Life is hectic and peaceful, joyful and painful. Life in the home can be all of these things because that's where *life* happens.

We're a motley crew of sinners made in God's image who are trying to live alongside each other under the gospel of God's grace. It's both beautiful and messy. So how does the "living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3) change the way I live my life?

The biggest questions I want to explore in this book are these: *What does the gospel have to do with our lives in the home? How does this grace change the way we live?*

Today Is Monday

Probably the one thing I was most excited about when I began writing this book was the accountability to be disciplined to think about these questions every day. What a joy!

And the only thing better than writing about how to treasure the gospel in your home is eating pretzels dipped in leftover va-

nilla frosting while you're writing. Now I have about a gram of salt rattling around in my keyboard!

Glimpses of Grace is about how we live in the “already but not yet” time in God’s redemptive history. Jesus is alive—he is not in the grave. The triumph of Easter Sunday is the reality in which we live every moment of every day. The things in our home have the potential to propel us to revel in the reality of Easter. Our homes also have the potential to distract us as we fix our hearts not on what is unseen but on what we see—the larger-than-life dishes piled high in the sink.

In this book I want to talk about what a treasure the gospel is to us, especially in our homes, propelling us to exult in the hope of God’s glory. Because God is good, we have an infinite number of reasons to praise him in our homes. “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!” (1 Chron. 16:34).

I realize this is a huge topic to discuss because it impacts our lives every day and has implications for eternity. I also realize that today is Monday, and the buzzer on the dryer just went off, and you’ve got to get your clothes out before they wrinkle. On your way to the laundry room you might notice a suspicious trail of fluid leading to the bathroom where you can hear your recently potty-trained child sniffing as she tries to hold back humiliated tears. Then the doorbell might ring, and the ringing might remind you that you ignored the alarm for an appointment you’re about to be late for.

I totally understand that, because that’s where I live, too.

That’s why I need to explore how the gospel is the predominant, defining reality in my life.

Remembering to live in God’s grace as I live in my home isn’t easy for me, and that’s why I need to process through the content of this book over and over again. Augustine said what my heart feels: “I count myself one of the number of those who write as they learn and learn as they write.”¹

I’m eager to know the “how” of how God intends to finish the

good work he has started in me as he conforms me to the image of his Son Jesus (Phil. 1:6). I desperately want to glorify him in whatever I do (1 Cor. 10:31). I want to be holy in all my conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15–16). I want to be an imitator of God, as his beloved child, walking in love as Christ loved me and gave himself up for me (Eph. 5:1–2).

I want to live in the reality that I have been brought to God through his Son. “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18).

A Bucket of Ice Water for a Sleepy Soul

I used to believe that this journey of sanctification—the adventure of God working in me, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13)—would only be accomplished when I am free from the “distractions” of my life.

As a result of my faulty thinking, I saw my roles as wife, mother, homemaker, and even minister of the gospel as things that detracted, or took away from, my spiritual life. That perspective ruled my day-to-day activities. For example, if I set my alarm clock to attempt to wake up before one of my babies and had my plans foiled, then I would think, “Well, there goes my communion with God today! Thanks a lot, _____!”

Part of my wake-up call was when we added more children to our family. My anxiety over trying to “get some time with God” got worse, and suddenly I realized that my prayer life had plummeted into near nonexistence. Tim Keller’s comment on prayer was a bucket of ice water over my sleepy soul: “Your private prayer life is one of the key indicators that your Christianity is inner and true and not just the product of your environment.”

I had allowed my spiritual life to be relegated to an easy chair with a cup of hot coffee in a quiet house without any noise or clutter or *life*. My mind needed to be renewed according to the gospel (Eph. 4:23).

This book is about how we experience the grace of the gospel as we go about our daily lives in the home. It's not about how to transcend to "a happy place" above the reality of life in the home. It's not about how to relish our mundane existence and cherish it as if it were an all-satisfying fountain if we would only soak it in for its own sake.

Glimpses of Grace is about how God's power in the gospel can transform us for his glory as we live by faith—right where we are in the mundane of our homes. It's about how God has made us new in his likeness of true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). The grace of God in Christ radically changes us. But how does he change the way we wash the same dishes every day? How does the gospel change the way our heart responds when we hear the doorbell ring during supper?

Just Feed Me the Gospel

At unfathomable cost to himself, Jesus died to reconcile us to God. His life and death were not just good examples for us to follow. When we repent of our sins, believing that Christ's death on the cross was for us in our place, God saves us. He forgives us in Christ (Eph. 4:32). He ransoms us "with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:18–19). God justifies us as though we had never sinned as he gives us the righteousness of his perfect Son (Phil. 3:9).

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight" (Eph. 1:7–8). At no point can we say, "I did it! It was hard work, but I tried my best and I did it." No, it is *God* who saves us, "for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

God seals believers in Christ with the indwelling Holy Spirit. And so God begins his ongoing work of sanctification, while the Holy Spirit assures us that we are God's children. Through his

work of grace, God changes the dynamics of our hearts so that we long to be with him. God also provides the power we need to be like him.

Apart from knowing God, we have no hope for being a wise parent, spouse, friend, floor sweeper, or bill payer. Because God raised Jesus from the dead and gave him glory, our faith and hope are in God (1 Pet. 1:21), not in our ever-changing circumstances or in the comforts of our homes and meticulously planned routines.

I told my husband as I started writing this book that since this book is about how the gospel applies to life, that means there are infinite numbers of chapters to write. I imagined myself just typing the gospel over and over again to fill up a book-sized gap between two attractive cover pages. And that's what I tried to do, illustrating ideas with personal examples from the home.

There's nothing I can say in this book that the gospel hasn't already said, so I'm just hoping to keep pointing you back to the gospel in every way I possibly can. Rejoicing in God through the gospel is what my soul needs, and I hope your soul benefits from it as well.

I'm glad you're coming along on this adventure with me.

Contained within the gospel are the brilliant manifestations of the character of God—whom we need an eternity to behold and enjoy! We're going to discuss how it is that the God whose “steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds” (Ps. 57:10) is doing a powerful work in your life right under the roof of your own home.

As my wannabe-cook daughter's favorite line from an animated movie about a rat that is a chef goes: “Let's do this thing!”

Part 1

Your Foundation in the Mundane

Today's Forecast: Mundane with a 100 Percent Chance of Miraculous



Again. He left his smoothie cup on the counter overnight *again*. My husband, Dave, is a gifted, brilliant man. But sometimes kitchen-related common sense eludes him.

Crusted Blueberries and Being Rude

Now there was no way the crusted blueberry bits were going to come off of this cup without some serious work on my part. I started talking to myself aloud (do you do this too?). “I don’t have time for this,” I mumbled. I gritted my teeth and set to scrubbing with vigor, and when Dave passed by the kitchen I let out an exasperated sigh and exaggerated my scrubbing efforts. “Gee, I hope I can get this cup clean. You didn’t rinse it out.”

Dave apologized and said he had simply forgotten.

“How rude,” I thought. “He knows how much work I do. The least he could have done was rinse out the cup. Rude . . .” But really, I was the rude one, and I knew it. The Holy Spirit brought to mind the famous love passage in 1 Corinthians 13: “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all

Your Foundation in the Mundane

things. Love never ends” (1 Cor. 13:4–8). The New International Version translates verse 8 as “love never fails.”

I knew I had failed to show love. Again. I fail at this every day. What hope is there for me to sacrificially give my life away as Jesus did, when I can’t even love others by doing something so menial like washing dishes? My only hope must be in the God who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex. 34:6).

Does God Rule Your Mundane?

This is such a stereotypical example of my life. I’m the wife of a busy church planter and mother to three kids, four years old and under. We live in the Middle East where sand seeps into every crack in the windows and doors and leaves a gritty film all over the floor for me to sweep. I do eight loads of laundry and clip four sets of fingernails and toenails each week.

My life is all things ordinary.

That’s why I loved writing this book. I need this message of grace and hope every single day. That’s because sometimes I launch into full-blown pity parties like the one you just read about. I used to think this sour kind of attitude about homemaking was necessary, acceptable, and even a rite of passage. After all, a common encouragement to someone in the midst of the trenches in homemaking or raising children is to console them with thoughts of “this, too, shall pass.” We “grin and bear it” and talk about everything we’re going to do “someday” when we “get our real life back.”

Those colloquial phrases used to be the summation of my hope. I believed that if I could just get through this awful and seemingly interminable season, then I would come out on the other side bruised and worn down; but at least it would be over. Perhaps then I would be free to serve the Lord with gladness, and I would be content.

But I was wrong.

When I attended a marriage conference taught by Paul Tripp,

he said something that devastated me. Tripp said, "If God doesn't rule your mundane, then he doesn't rule you. Because that's where you live." Dramatic, life-altering moments come only a few times during our lifetime—that's why they're dramatic. The rest of our lives are lived in the common, ordinary mundane.

Home managing is my ordinary. Regardless of what your normal is, I'm sure we can agree that that's where we live.

Glorify God in Whatever You Do

I know that serving my family is akin to serving Jesus, and when I manage my home I should work as unto the Lord. Colossians 3:23–24 says, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."

We ought to consider our home managing "as the creation of a living organism that nurtures the peace of Christ and the righteousness of God."¹ Statements like that one encouraged me greatly.

I already believed Scripture, as it extols the role of a homemaker as worth tremendous value. I had no problem seeing homemaking as meaningful in light of eternity. Eternal perspective? Got it. But what about *today*? How is today included in the scope of eternity? Tripp's comment reminded me that the Bible has a lot to say about the mundane. First Corinthians 10:31 says, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Yes! *Of course* I want to glorify God! He is the supreme treasure of the universe, and he is worthy of my everything. At the core of my being, my greatest desire it to bring glory to God. I've even considered stenciling the Westminster Catechism on my wall to remind me of this truth:

Question 1: What is the chief end of man?

Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.²

Your Foundation in the Mundane

Whether I ought to make my goal glorifying God in everything was not in question. I knew that living for his glory is to be my greatest joy. My problem was simply *how*? *How* can I fold laundry and settle sibling squabbles to God's glory when I am so prone to failure because of my sin? *How* does the gospel make me into a woman who scrubs toilets or wipes runny noses heartily as for the Lord? *How* does the gospel make me into a woman who cares about honoring God in the way I fold laundry and serve dinner?

How does my citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20) change how I manage my home?

Diapers Can Set Your Heart and Mind on Things Above

If the Word of God is for everyday people who do everyday things, then surely Scripture talks about how we can magnify God in the midst of the mundane. And if the mundane moments of dishes and diapers can be done with an aim to enjoying God, then the spiritual vitality we will experience in our home is nothing short of miraculous.

The opportunity for growth in holiness lies right in front of your face—sitting in the tepid dishwasher, festering in the laundry basket, at your crowded dinner table, and under the car seat where your toddler stashed her leftover granola bar for later. Sure, fuzzy mold might be growing there, but in these moments it is also where growth in holiness happens.

Right where we are, we can see glimpses of grace as we learn to apply passages like Colossians 3:1–3, which says, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

God powerfully brings our ministry to fruition and our deeds done in faith (2 Thess. 1:11). So, that umpteenth dirty diaper, when viewed in light of the hope and promises in God's Word, can be a significant means of God's transforming work in your life.

The Cross, the Crown, and the “Titus 2 Woman”

Let's look at Titus 2 as an example. Titus 2 is a nitty-gritty, practical, how-to list of qualities that godly women ought to have and things godly women ought to do. Women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or enslaved to alcohol (v. 3). Women are to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their husband (v. 5). Women are to teach what is good (i.e., “sound doctrine,” v. 1), training younger women to love their husband and children (v. 4).

Titus 2 contains not only a to-do list of things that you could post on an index card on your bathroom mirror. Titus 2 also gives us our motive for doing these things, which is that “the word of God may not be reviled” (v. 5) and that “in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (v. 10). Motivation can't be written on an index card—it must be written on your heart.

How does this motive to adorn the gospel of God get written on our hearts? Our hearts must be transformed by Christ. Verse 11 says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.” Paul adds in verse 12 that this grace is “training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”

The gospel motivation is presented with a promise of a future hope. As we are doing these things, we are “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (vv. 13–14).

That's where faith comes in and the rubber meets the road. When I look back to the cross and see that God did not spare his own Son for me (Rom. 8:32), and when I look forward to God's promises of future glory (Titus 2:13), he gives me the power to graciously pick up after my husband, who forgot to rinse his cup, and not seethe with anger and lash out verbally.

Your Foundation in the Mundane

Two Wrong Ways Don't Make It Right

I can imagine what you may be thinking at this point because I'm thinking it too. I believe that is true, but I've got lots of things going against me. I can't hold that idea in my mind long enough to meditate on it. I can already hear static baby noises from the next room coming through the baby monitor. I can't apply these truths with consistency. What if it's not just a dirty cup but an entire house that looks like a sandstorm was unleashed inside? What then?

I need to have my heart change.

If you're like me, then you might be ready to give up right now. That is so tempting for me. I see the high standards of holiness, but I know I can't possibly meet them. In this case I might just slop my way through the dishes, grumbling in my heart and making snide remarks about "how many times have I reminded you" hoping to shame my husband into making a sincere confession of how he's wrong and I'm right. (When has that strategy ever worked, by the way?)

Or I could approach this scene a different way. I know the Bible says to do all things without grumbling and to hold onto the gospel instead (Phil. 2:14), and I want to do what is right. God teaches us how to love each other (1 Thess. 4:9). And I want to honor God in everything I do, just as 1 Corinthians 10:31 says I should. I determine that what I need to do is try harder. So I tape an index card with Philippians 2:14 on it to the window above my sink so that I will be reminded not to sin. Then I do the dishes and I hold my tongue as my husband passes by the kitchen. Now I've managed to avoid cutting remarks and clanging the dishes around to solicit attention and a possible apology. Nice work, Gloria, you've done it. I congratulate myself on a job well done. My gloating, however, reveals that I have another problem on my hands: self-righteousness. The forbearance I displayed in the kitchen apparently wasn't a fruit of the Spirit. It was rooted in sinful pride. At the end of the day I'm steeped in self-righteousness

—basking in pride or wallowing in guilt that I could have done a better job.

The dirty dishes are not my biggest problem in life, even though it seems like they are when they're stacked up to the ceiling and I've got a million other things to do. The biggest problem in my life and yours is sin. How can I stand before the God who does all things according to his character, a character that includes perfect justice (2 Thess. 1:6)?

Jesus: A Home Manager's Only Hope

So what can be done? Clearly we can't live our lives lawlessly, taking pot shots at people to make ourselves feel better. And clearly we can't just muster up our self-determination and will power to "do the right thing." I simply can't do it. Either way I choose, I don't please God.

Thankfully there is one who did. Jesus did everything without complaining, including going to the cross to die in my place and taking my sin on himself. Jesus is the ultimate man who lives in sincere submission to God the Father. The Bible teaches that not only is Jesus my example but he is also my Savior. His atoning death did just that—he atoned for (paid for) my sins. And he didn't stay dead. Jesus is the one who says, "I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Rev. 1:18). When I take hold of Jesus by faith as my only hope to please God, God declares that I am justified. Christ's righteousness becomes mine. That's grace.

The grace shown to me at the cross, and the future grace I look forward to, prevent me from two deadly attitudes:

1) *I'm a terrible housewife*. I know I should do better, and I have no excuses. Why can't I just be like so-and-so who has it all together? I heap on guilt and condemnation and steep myself in pride. Yes, pride. I would rather wallow in introspective self-loathing than repent and look to Christ for acceptance and power to live each moment.

Your Foundation in the Mundane

2) *I'm an amazing housewife*. It really is quite remarkable how I can juggle all of these things. My friends say so all the time. I discipline myself to get things done and regardless of what happens, I get it done, and not a hair is out of place while I'm doing it, too. Frankly, I can't understand why so-and-so who has less on her plate can't seem to at least manage what she has. I steep myself in self-righteousness and pride. I would rather bask in my own glory than in the glory of Christ as he gave himself for me on the cross to secure my future.

So grace reminds me to live in the reality of the gospel and the future promised to me. Because of what Christ has already done on my behalf and will do for me in the future, I can reject guilty loathing and prideful gloating.

Milton Vincent put it this way: "The righteousness of God, credited to me through Christ, is not merely something I rest in, but it is also the premier saving reality by which God governs me."³

Furthermore, as a result of Christ's work on the cross, I have everything I need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3–4), and all these things are gifts I don't deserve. God is gracious to me "according to his great mercy" (1 Pet. 1:3).

Jesus Died for Me; I Can Trust Him

This grace humbles me. That Jesus would allow himself to be led like a lamb to slaughter and not answer those who reviled him—it takes my breath away. That God would send his Son to die for me and purchase for me "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Pet. 1:4)—I am undone.

The joy of the Lord motivates and strengthens me to give my time to serve others in washing their dishes while looking forward in faith to hear my Savior say to me, "Well done, good and faithful servant." As I joyfully and humbly give my time and energy to do the dirty dishes my husband left behind, I lose nothing and gain everything.

Living in the reality of this gospel and the future promise of

glory motivates me to love others as Jesus loves. I have received mercy in Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 2:10). This afternoon at my kitchen sink I must be confident that what he promises for me in the future will come to pass. That's faith.

So here I am at my kitchen sink, scrubbing crusty blueberry bits off the inside of a cup. But instead of grieving over my inadequacies to serve joyfully or gloating with pride that I've restrained my evil tongue from making snide remarks, an entirely different dynamic is at work.

It's faith working through love (Gal. 5:5-6).

God works in me through his Word (1 Thess. 2:13). This gift of grace enables me to praise the Lord and serve others gladly as I confess with tears of joyful relief, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36).

Even in my darkest doubts when I do the same thing again the next day, my hope is still built on the righteousness of Christ. The gospel keeps me relating to God on the basis of Jesus's perfections, not on the illusions of my religious achievements. God strengthens me and protects me according to his faithfulness, not mine (2 Thess. 3:3). So I can scrub dried blueberry bits as unto the Lord as my heart is satisfied in God because his kindness to me in Christ leads me to repentance again and again.

Miraculous in the Mundane

Do you see how everyday life presents opportunities for our growth in holiness? God can use the ordinary moments in your life to glorify himself by conforming you into the image of his Son. That is precisely what he intends to do.

Dirty dishes in the sink or red crayons smushed into an electrical socket by a curious toddler are not just worrisome ordeals in your otherwise uneventful day. They're opportunities to see glimpses of grace.



Sometimes life feels a lot like a burden—day in and day out it's the same chores and tasks, challenges and discouragements, anxieties and responsibilities. Dust bunnies show up on the stairwell, social commitments clutter the calendar, and our families demand daily attention and care. At times, just catching our breath seems like an impossible feat.

So where is God in all of this? Does he care about the way we unload the dishwasher or balance the budget? Do the little things like changing diapers or cooking meals make a difference? And how can we use our spheres of influence for God's glory and our joy?

Whether you are a stay-at-home mom or a working woman splitting time between the office and home, Gloria Furman—writer, pastor's wife, cross-cultural worker, and mom—encourages us to see the reality of God's grace in all of life, especially those areas that often appear to be boring and unimportant. Using personal examples and insightful stories, her richly theological reflections help us experience the gospel's extraordinary power to transform our ordinary lives.

"I know no one who is leveraging her everyday life more for the glory of God than Gloria Furman. I want to learn about God and grace from people who live it and fight to do so."

Jennie Allen

author, *Stuck*, *Anything*, and *Chase*

"Gloria is real! She's going to tell you about the smell of her kitchen floor and the steadfast love of her Savior. Strong, humble, and winsome, this book calls all of us to walk in faith."

Kathleen Nielson

Director of Women's Initiatives, The Gospel Coalition

GLORIA FURMAN is a wife, mother of four young children, doula, and blogger. In 2008 her family moved to the Middle East to plant Redeemer Church of Dubai where her husband, Dave, serves as the pastor. She blogs regularly at The Gospel Coalition, Domestic Kingdom, and Desiring God, and is author of the forthcoming book *Treasuring Christ When Your Hands Are Full: Gospel Meditations for Busy Moms*.

CHRISTIAN LIVING / FAMILY

 **CROSSWAY**
www.crossway.org