



OUR LOVE STORY

The “Almost” Complete and Unabridged Version
(updated 2/14/2024)

Benny and I met in 1977 at “Joe’s Store” across from the high school. This was the hang out for all the school kids during the lunch hour. Benny’s cousin owned this little store and Benny worked there. I had seen him there at times when I would go for lunch, but we didn’t “officially” meet until the summer of my 16th birthday. Benny had just graduated high school and I had just completed my freshman year. By the time my junior year started we were “going steady”.

In the summer of 1978, we became engaged and on May 19th, 1979 we were married. Benny was 21 and I was 1 month shy of my 18th birthday. Our wedding week was hectic to say the least because prior to our wedding we went to my Senior Prom, my Senior Baccalaureate and my Senior Graduation, ALL within 10 days of our wedding. Needless to say, my mom and dad were probably ready to get me out of there. J

Sound like the beginning of a perfect love story so far? Not in the least.

Benny and I weren’t sincere born-again Christians, and we definitely did not live a moral life. We were young and stupid to be quite honest. Sure, we went to church with Benny’s parents at times but sitting on a church pew doesn’t make you a Christian or moral.

By the end of the year 1983 we had 3 children. 2 of them were our own biological children and 1 child was my niece that we had adopted in 1981. Even with trying to raise these 3 children we just didn’t get it right.

We even went through a brief period of trying to “play church”. We had moved to Lawton because of Benny’s business, and we began to attend a very large church. We became very involved with the young married couples. I went to ladies Bible studies, I taught Sunday School, I did all the things I thought I was “supposed” to do to be a good wife and mother, but then we moved back to Blair.

At first, we tried to continue with our new way of life, but as there was no root. All those “seeds” that fell in Lawton only fell away. *Matthew 13:20-21* “The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away”. Our choices of friends, our choices of weekend “fun” and our own failure as a young family trying to live life without a true and sincere salvation

led us, led ME, to a divorce in the summer of 1988. I thought I wanted “freedom”, I thought I really didn’t love this man, I thought I could do better.....I thought so many stupid and foolish things.

After the divorce my biological children and I moved to Lawton, about 60 miles from Benny. Our adopted daughter went home to live with her biological mother, my sister. (A story for another time) I was a new “free” single mom! I thought at the time that I had just what I wanted. Was I ever wrong!

I thought this new found free life was going to be just what I wanted, but it wasn’t long at all that I began to sense a void in my heart and life. I spent my weekends partying, drinking and simply trying my best to fill that void. Benny had remained in Blair and had the children every other weekend, which again gave me even more “freedom”. Little did I know that Benny was going through the same, only his heart was angry, hurt and bitter and rather than trying to fill a void he was trying to deaden the pain with alcohol and drugs.

In late November of that same year, I received a very distressed phone call from my father in law concerning Benny. The circumstances of our divorce had just become too much for him to bear and he had voluntarily checked himself into a mental rehabilitation facility and I was told he was not in a very healthy state of mind.

Have you ever felt the overwhelming, crushing conviction of God that you had really, really messed up big time? This phone call and this news about this man that I “thought” I no longer loved brought me literally to my knees.

The children and I lived in a tiny, minutely tiny, apartment. I could literally walk about 5 steps from the phone on the kitchen wall to the couch. After I hung up the phone I could barely breathe as I took those 5 steps to that couch.....where I fell to my knees and broke. (I can still to this day vividly see this place and this event in my mind.)

I knew how I was “supposed” to pray, but I, also, knew that those forms, those repeated words I had learned were not what I needed to do this time. I remembered how I had seen and heard my Granny pray when I was growing up. She always seemed to be talking to her best friend and believe me, she said exactly what was on her heart and her mind and I never doubted for a moment that God was hearing her.

So I prayed.....and I cried. I cried for Benny and for our children and for everyone that I knew had been hurt because of my own selfishness and then I cried for myself. That was such a moment of confusion, questions, doubts and insecurity at first. I knew what I was supposed to say. I knew how the Methodist’s, with their words in the back of the hymnal prayed. But, I knew how Granny prayed so I knew God would hear me if I just poured out to him everything; every hurt, every wrong, every lie.....every sin.

I began to re-evaluate my life and my marriage/divorce and the decisions I had made that led up to the circumstances that were happening at that time with Benny. I began to realize that the saying "You don't know what you really have until you lose it" was 100% truth. I began to realize and admit to myself that this situation that I was in was my own fault. You see, people that refuse to accept their own faults, their own mistakes, their own failures will never be able to humble themselves enough to admit they need help. God gives us a free will to choose Him and to ask for His help. He will never ever force anyone into salvation, but that night no one had to tell me what I needed to do.

I made a commitment to God that night. I admitted my own failures and my own faults in how my marriage failed and how my little family were torn apart. I knew it was my fault and I knew that I wasn’t going

to be able to do it alone. I made a promise to God that night that if he helped me restore my marriage and put my little family back together that I would serve him for the rest of my life. I knew that it was going to be a difficult road, but I was determined to do whatever it took for as long as it took. At some point along that road though this "bargain" that I made with God grew into a deep and personal commitment for me and no longer a conditional means to get what I wanted. Many things happened between that night on my knees and the next 4 months. I had a determination and resolve that I was going to do whatever it took, no matter what it took, to fix my wrong. Only now it wasn't just me alone, I had Help.

In December the kids and I moved back to Blair and by March of 1989 we moved back home with Benny. However, just because we were all living in the same house didn't mean that things were healed. Benny wasn't saved at that time and was very bitter and had in fact become an atheist. He was still hurt and angry, very angry at everyone and blamed me....and God. He continued to drink and stay away from home quite a bit. But, no man is beyond God's reach of mercy and grace and over the next two years things began to change.

In the fall of 1990 my brother, Billy, was living in Humboldt, Tennessee with my uncle. Billy had been a long-time drug addict and had gotten saved under my uncle's ministry and was being a powerful influence on my husband. Not only was he helping my uncle in his church, but he was very actively involved in the homeless ministry that they had there at the church.

My brother knew the condition of Benny's heart at that time and how he felt about God. He also knew the circumstances regarding our divorce and rocky reconciliation. He knew about my commitment, and he knew Benny's doubts, not only about me, but about God. He began to call Benny and talk to him, witness to him, almost every day.

After much coaxing from my brother, Benny and I decided to make a trip to Tennessee. My uncle's church was in a revival at the time of our trip and that revival became a very important turning point, both in our marriage and in the life of our little family.

When we arrived that night the church service was still going on. Now you need to know that Benny and I had neither one had ever been to a Pentecostal church service. I had heard all the crazy stories. We had 2 of "those" churches in the small town where we lived. Benny's parents were members of the Methodist church and any involvement we had with a church was with a Methodist church. We knew nothing about a "spirit filled" church.

When we got out of the car and got closer to the building we could hear the music. The closer we got, the louder it got, nothing at all like the Methodist hymns we were used to. Then when we opened the door and walked in you could instantly feel something stirring. It wasn't really loud or different style of music, it was just different. Benny and I really didn't understand it, but we both acknowledged later that we felt some kind of "electricity" in the air.

After the service that night Benny and I sat up with my brother and my uncle drinking coffee, eating vienna sausages and crackers and talking about the ministry that they were doing. My uncle loved to stay up late but believe it or not that night he went to bed before we did. In fact I think that night we literally didn't go to bed until the sun was coming up.

For me as a big sister, to see such a change in my brother's life and to see how God was using his life to help other men in that community just absolutely amazed me. To hear him share God's word and witness to

Benny was something I'll never forget. Billy's story was one of a young boy caught up in a world of drugs, wrong friends and wrong choices in life to a complete life of service to others.

The next night of the revival though was a turning point in our lives, the turning point for our marriage and family.

The evangelist that was doing the revival was very prophetic in things that he said to people. Benny and I had never met this man and my brother said that he did not give him any details about our marriage situation. He wanted Benny to be sure and know that if anything happened it was coming from God and not man.

During this service we were completely amazed as we sat and watched this man go from person to person and tell them things about their life that no one else knew. One in particular was with a lady that had come to the revival that night. He went over to her and began talking to her about her grieving over the loss of her husband. Then he told her that God wanted her to know that her husband had perfect vision now that he was in heaven. The look on this woman's face was of absolute shock. She began to cry and cry, but you could tell it was tears of joy and not sorrow. We later found out after service that when her husband passed away he was blind.

He went from person to person doing this and you could tell by everyone's reactions that they were in fact speaking to God's prophet. Another thing that was happening is that each time he spoke to someone he would lay his hands on their head, and they would become so weak that they either had to sit back in their seats or some of them simply fell to the ground.

Then the evangelist came over to me.

I will be very honest and tell you that I was a little bit afraid. My brother and my uncle immediately came over to stand by me. The evangelist looked at me and said that God was telling me that I was going to have a beautiful new home someday. At first, I thought that was so odd that he was telling me something about materialistic things. Then he just looked at me and smiled and laid his hands on my head and down I went. It was like something very warm and very strong rushed from the top of my head down to my feet and I didn't just fall to my seat or my knees but to the floor. I began to cry with such a feeling of joy that I had never experienced before. When I looked over at Benny and saw the evangelist heading towards him I tried very hard to stand up, but couldn't. My legs were like spaghetti noodles and my brother and Uncle Dickie had to stand me up because I definitely didn't want to miss what was going to happen next.

When this man came over to Benny you could see the tension in Benny's face. He was skeptical to say the least. The evangelist had Benny stand in front of him. He looked Benny in the face and said, "You don't believe in God anymore, do you?" The look of surprise on Benny's face was very obvious. Then the man said, "But you want to, don't you?" Benny was obviously shaken up at this point. Then the man laid his hands on Benny's forehead and said, "And you will." At that point Benny fell to his knees and became so weak that he couldn't even stand.....

That night, at the Church of the Firstborn in Humboldt, Tennessee my husband did begin to believe again and with God's help, our lives changed. That "new home" that was prophesized to me was not about a new house, but a "new Christian home". Our lives began to change that very night and on February 14th, 1991 in a little church in Vernon, Texas, with our son and daughter as our attendants, we were re-married. 2

Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.

Although that was 33 years ago today when Benny and I celebrate our anniversary we do not count the divorced time. But in order to honor the reuniting of our family, plus Benny says it's easier to remember, we celebrate every Valentine's Day as if the divorce never happened. So today makes our 45th anniversary.

Have we had problems in these last 44 years? Most definitely. Have we had times when Satan tried to destroy “what God had joined back together”? Beyond a shadow of a doubt. Has my commitment that I made to God that night knelt on my knees in front of that little couch changed? Never, wavered a little, yes, but never ever have I gone back on my word and nether has God. I’ve had doubts, I’ve had questions, I’ve had hurt, but I’ve never broken that covenant I made with God, my husband and my family that night. Have I learned what being a spirit filled Pentecostal means? Absolutely!

This may sound like a perfect fairy tale love story, but it’s not really. There is only ONE true and perfect love story and if you would ever really like for me to tell you about that story, all you have to do is ask.

John 3:16-17 “For God so love the world that he have his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but the world through Him might be saved.”

To hear “the rest of the story” you’ll have to buy the book. #theunconditionalstandard



The Missing Peace

(edited June 2024)

Every time that a baby is born into God's world, they are born with a piece of their life's peace missing. That piece of that puzzle has one distinctive shape that can never be duplicated but must be filled with the original piece designed just for that person.

The Bible says that we are knit together in our mother's womb. Well, I believe that in part of God's knitting he purposely leaves a gap in his work that can only be filled with that one piece that was created only by him.

As that baby grows into a young child you will begin to see the first signs of their search. When you see a struggle on their face in making a choice to do what is right or what is wrong, they are beginning to feel that tug.

As they grow and become a young person they begin to notice a void, a "missing" feeling, but they can't explain it. They don't understand what it really is so they begin their search. At first, they think that maybe it's a boyfriend or girlfriend that they need or maybe it's the act of doing things to "fit in" with the popular people like drinking or experimenting with drugs, but no matter what they try that emptiness is still there.

As this person reaches adulthood the search for that missing piece begins to grow stronger. Many times, men and women mistake that longing inside them as a need to be in a relationship with a man or woman, many times even involving sex in that relationship hoping that even that will fill the void, but it doesn't. They go from relationship to relationship.

Another search leads people into marriage, fairytale fantasy marriages that aren't based on a mutual search of the couple, but of them each looking for something different. Many times men think that they must fill that void with money or things. They mistakenly think that the buying of things will make their wives happy and it only adds to the stress of the marriage. They mistakenly feel that they must have the best job, the best house or the best vehicles to fit in with their peers, but inside they're really searching for that one thing to fill that void.

Other times women feel that if they only had a baby then that empty feeling inside will be filled. Sometimes after the birth of a baby a woman can be so busy and preoccupied that they almost feel like it's worked because

they don't have much time to think of anything else than the child, but then that longing resurfaces. Those quiet times when that baby is sleeping become times of noticing that void again. These women feel like they may not actually be satisfied now with that child, so they begin searching again. So no they go into the job market, to feel successful, but it just doesn't "fit".

Many, many times these searches lead both men and women outside of their own marriages and into arms of other men and women who are only doing the same thing....searching.

Why do we do this? What is it inside of a person that makes them notice this void? Sometimes people actually do begin to realize that this emptiness must have something to do with God.

"If this emptiness has to do with God," they say, "then let's find some of Him and put it in that space." They begin to talk like they've found him. They start using phrases such as, "I'm praying for you" or "just have faith and believe". They begin to refrain from using bad language, they don't frequent the bars any longer, they even have Bibles in their homes. And even on rare occasions, mainly holiday's, they will attend a church service.

Wow! To those on the outside it would appear that they have finally found the missing piece. They're doing all the "right" things now.....but why do these people still feel that emptiness? Why is it when they're all alone that they still sense that void in their heart?

They're "talking the talk". They're being "good people". Some may even claim that they are a Christian, but why do they not feel whole then?

When these people get to this place in their life all they have done is traced the shape of that puzzle piece and made their own version of a "God piece" to fit, but it's still man made. It's filled with criteria; lists to check off that people think that God expects out of them or that other peers or family members expect from them.

God's design was for fellowship with man. He wants man to seek out a relationship with HIM. He wants a life given to service and to HIS will. He doesn't want you to look outside the puzzle box and see if you can find a different piece that can be squeezed into "your" place. He designed one piece for one person.

The true beauty of this analogy is that when you do get to the point that you believe you have found that peace with God, and you go to Him and He shows you exactly where he placed your piece of the puzzle, when you lay it down and it "clicks" and lies smooth with the rest of the entire vision of your life, you'll know. Your search is over. Now you can spray that puzzle glue on this treasure and display it so that all can share in your genuine and true masterpiece of peace!

Psalm 139:13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

Colossians 1:17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.



THE BEAUTY OF OUR TOWN

The beauty of our town
Is really quite unique
We have no fancy shopping mall
Not even one boutique

The beauty of our town
You can't see in a store
But you'll see it in our faces
By our smiles and more

There's such a special feeling
That comes from love that's shared
That comes from friends and family
That really truly care

When bad times come and they do
We all do so much better
Knowing friends in our home town
Will all be there together

The Lord said, "Love your neighbor
As you would love yourself"
For that's the beauty of our town
By far it's greatest wealth

By: Paula Wilkie
May 5, 1991



Daddy

(originally written in 2012)

A few years ago, I attended a lady's church conference in Mustang, Oklahoma. At that conference we were given a small card with this question, "How would your life be different if you knew (on a gut-level, not superficially) that you were always, forever, completely and lavishly so-loved every minute of your existence?" We were to write our answers on the back of the card. My answer was, "I would never ever have to feel insecure again." I keep this card on my bulletin board right above my desk so that I can see it every single day, because since that day that I wrote my answer on that card, God has done some miraculous things for me showing me that He does love me "always, forever, completely and lavishly every minute of my existence!"

My perception of an earthly "Father" couldn't be any more perfect than daddy. Growing up daddy was the hugger, the kisser and the affectionate parent. Daddy knew how to love each one of us kids so much that we all thought we were his favorite. Now momma loved us just as much, but her personality was just different than daddy and she wasn't as outwardly affectionate.

I can honestly say when I think of the expression "my daddy" it gives me such a feeling of immeasurable love in my heart. ♥ I have no images in my mind or feelings in my heart, of the neglect, hurt, and abuse of an unloving Father, but they are images of someone who loved me unconditionally, who knew how to show love, who felt my pain when I hurt, who forgave me completely when I messed up (and I have a LOT), who, without even blinking an eye, would grab me and hug me and make me feel "so loved". I have never, not even for the smallest amount of measurable time, had ANY doubts that my daddy loved me and would have given his own life for mine if it ever came down to that.

Daddy gave us the best example we could have ever asked for to show what the "love of a Heavenly Father" is really like. He helped us so much to understand what it really feels like to have those arms of "a Heavenly Father" wrapped around us. He showed us a true example of unconditional love. And because of the

love I feel for my earthly father, it has given me the ability to love "my Heavenly Father" and to truly understand that he loves me in ways that are immeasurable!

Now..... I know that not every person has been blessed with a good or even a present earthly father. Some of you may not even know your father. Some of you may have been the one that actually suffered the abuse, neglect and pain from your earthly father. Some of you may not have even seen your earthly father for years. Some of you may not have ever felt that paternal kind of love from your father and therefore it makes it difficult for you to relate to your "Heavenly Father."

For those of you, I would like to share a story.

Many years ago, I had a friend of mine, I'll call her Linda, who shared with me her story about her father. She has been abused as a child by her father, physically and sexually. Therefore, her image of a daddy was not a good one. As she grew into adulthood, she was a very, very insecure person, doubting that there was anyone alive on the planet that could truly love her. But there was one special man that God gave her as a husband that helped her to understand.

She wasn't a Christian when they married although her new husband was. As he tried to explain to her his relationship with his "heavenly Father" it became next to impossible for her to be able to empathize. To her the only image of a "father" that she had was one of pain, hurt and not of love. However, as time went by, she began to seek out the truth of God's love and did eventually become a born again Christian. But it wasn't until she was blessed to attend a Christian Ladies Conference in the mountains of Colorado that God's true "Fatherly Love" was revealed to her.

The theme of that Ladies Conference I remember dealt with "Our Heavenly Father", but although Linda was a born-again Christian the one area of her Christian Walk that she struggled with the most was fully being able to believe and "feel" the true love of a "Heavenly Father" because of the relationship she had with her earthly father. She would walk out of each workshop and hide in her hotel room because each one seemed to deal with things that just brought horrible images to her memory.

But then..... In her hotel room was a large picture window that looked out at the huge mountain range there in Colorado. It seemed like the mountains went on forever and the beauty of it was absolutely breathtaking. That afternoon Linda knelt in her hotel room below that window and cried out to God to reveal to her how He as a Heavenly Father could love her so much when her only image of a father was so painful. Then it was as if the window became a giant vision with nothing else in her view but the expanse of the mountains. She began to cry uncontrollably and couldn't see anything but the view from her window. She began to feel a warmth flood her body from her head to her feet and heard God speak to her and say, "Linda, do you see the expanse of this mountain range? Do you see the beauty of it? Do you see the size of it? Do you see that the borders of this range seem to have NO END? THAT, Linda, is how much that I as YOUR HEAVENLY, FATHER LOVE YOU!"

And at that same moment the door of her hotel room opened and some of her friends that she has gone to the conference with, and the speaker in the workshop that she ran out of, came in and knelt down surrounding her. One of the ladies said, "Linda, God sent us here right at this exact moment to tell you that he is YOUR FATHER and that HE LOVES YOU beyond what you can even comprehend and said for us to wrap our arms

around you and hug you so that you can PHYSICALLY FEEL HIS LOVE and to NEVER DOUBT IT AGAIN! And they did! ♥

If your relationship with your Heavenly Father is something you haven't been able to quite grasp because of your relationship with your earthly father, then I want to encourage you to look out the window! GOD is a FATHER like no other and HE LOVES YOU BEYOND MEASURE! And your father's out there, please understand that YOU could be molding the very image of GOD in their minds.

I am so beyond grateful for the kind of daddy that I had, and I will miss him every single day of my earthly life. But because of my Heavenly Father, I know that I will see my daddy again.

My Christian Heritage

My Granny



**Many, many people
In this world today
Have no Christian guidance
No one to show the way**

**But I have been so lucky
So fortunate and so blessed
To have a Christian Granny
Who showed “the way” the best**

**She took us all to church
As we grew, through the years
We sat and watched her pray
And shed those joyful tears**

**I remember as a child
I used to sit and gaze
And watch her cry, speak in tongues
And lift her hands in praise**

**She always loved the Lord
Through every trial or strife
She taught by her example
And how she lived her life**

**I use to watch her braid
Her beautiful long hair
She'd hold it between her teeth
And use such special care**

**I remember chocolate gravy
Cheese and crackers, and Papa's cokes
And going in the summer time
For those Canadian River soaks**

**I'll never forget the summer
When watching T.V. had to wait
Because Papa was glued to his recliner
Watching Watergate**

**Through all those summers, all those years
And each day in between
Granny's faith never wavered
And on the Lord she leaned**

**She prayed and prayed for all of us
Each and every one
To give our hearts to Jesus Christ
God's only begotten son**

**I asked her once, when we were talking
About her children one day
If you could speak to them from heaven
What words would you say?**

**With tears in her eyes and in a gentle voice
She said, “Children, please don't wait.
Please give your hearts to God
Before it is too late.”**

**Thank you, Granny, oh so much
For this heritage you gave me
You've lived your life and served the Lord
And with his love you bathed me**

**Though my heart may be aching and my tears
falling
There is a peace so sweet
Because I know in my heart in Heaven someday
You and I will meet**

**There we'll shed tears of joy as our Savior looks
on
Because to Him I, too, gave my heart
And though down here on earth you may be
gone
In Heaven we'll never depart**

**My Christian heritage, my sweet Granny
So loving and her faith so true
I love you, Granny, and the rest of my life
I want to be just like you.**

The Difference in Being a Parent and a Grandparent

My husband (a brand new grandparent at the time) and a friend of his were swapping bragging rights over their new granddaughters. My husband's friend made this statement, "If I had known that grandkids were going to be so much fun I would have just skipped the kids and gone straight to the grandkids." Tis so true! But is just having fun with the grandkids all that we grandparents are supposed to do?

I have heard grandparents make statements such as: "My role is just to spoil them, give them whatever they want and send them back home to their parents." "These kids aren't my responsibility they're theirs." "I don't have to worry about that, they're not my kids." And finally, "With grandchildren, it's all care and NO responsibility." While many grandparents may make some of these statements in jest I'm afraid that there are some who are as serious as they can be. Is this really the attitude that we as grandparents are supposed to have?

Let me ask you? Exactly what do you think the role of a grandparent is? What do you think the role of a parent is? Are they similar or are they two complete and totally different roles? I think the answer can be "both".

As a parent I was completely responsible 100% of the time for the mind, body and soul of my children. It was my responsibility to raise them ie: to see that they had food to eat, clothes to wear, a roof over their heads and an education, both in academics and of things spiritual. This was my full time responsibility from the moment of their birth until they reached adulthood.

Now as a grandparent, or NaNa as I'm called by my grandchildren, I feel that there is only 1 phrase in this previous paragraph that does not apply to my role...."100% of the time". I do understand that with there being so many grandparents raising grandchildren that they do have this role 100% of the time and I do commend those grandparents, but I can only speak from what applies to me.

During the time that my grandchildren are under my care, whether it be as their babysitter while their parents work, or as their play date captain if they come to "visit", I am just as responsible for their minds, bodies and souls as their parents are. There are often times that I actually feel more responsibility as a grandparent than I ever did as a parent. I think that it's because as a grandparent I still have the responsibility of being a Christian example to my adult children as well as now being an example to their children. I know, too, that this is going to become even stronger for me as my grandchildren grow and begin to really notice my example both to them and to their parents.

I do know that the parent's role is very different and they have the *ultimate* responsibility to "raise" these grandchildren to adulthood, but I don't want to ever forget that as their grandparent that I, too, have a role in the molding of these children.

Did you know that there is only one place in the entire Bible that mentions a mother AND a grandmother together in one scripture? 2Timothy 1:5 "For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your **grandmother** Lois and your **mother** Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well."

Wow! Can you imagine what kind of examples BOTH of these women must have been to Timothy? Here is an example of faith that transcended three generations! Take a look at where this faith dwelt FIRST....with the GRANDMOTHER! Can you imagine making such an impact on your child and grandchild that your actual name would be mentioned in God's Holy word? That thought just boggles my mind!

I was blessed enough to have had one of the Godliest grandmothers on the planet and I like to think that I am a product of her life and prayers. Although a generation was skipped between she and myself as far as me having a Christian parent, I often think of her example to me as a child. If I can only be to my grandchildren what she was to me then I will feel that I have succeeded in this role.

Now, as the title suggests, what differences are there though in being a parent and grandparent? Well, first of all I got to go to the hospital and wait for the arrival of my grandchildren without having to endure the pain of a labor and delivery. That part was wonderful!

I have to tell you that there is no feeling in the world that compares to that moment when your child has a child. The first time that my husband got to hold Faith, our first grandchild, he looked down at her and then looked at me and said, "Our baby had a baby." That's really how you feel, too, and until you experience it for yourself there are no amount of words I can type that can translate that feeling.

When you hold that grandchild for the first time and know that it is your blood that had a role in creating yet another life through your child it is very humbling. When that grandchild looks up at you with the eyes of their parent it is like a step back in time. The feeling that comes over you is almost like the love and devotion that you had for your own child has now, in the blink of an eye, been multiplied a thousand times over. It's one of the hardest feelings to ever truly convey to someone else who has not experienced it yet. If you are a grandparent reading this then I know that you know exactly what I'm talking about.

Now let's see, what other differences can I find?

1. When a parent stresses out and nearly has an coronary because their child has poured the entire box of Cheerios on the floor, a grandparent just smiles and says, "Oh, that's okay. It's not that big of a mess."
2. When you're out at a restaurant and the children are misbehaving very badly, as a grandparent you just brush it off while their parents look at you and say, "You would have never let us get away with that!"
3. When parents tend to use the words "Just wait a minute" or "I just don't have time to do that right now" all too often, a grandparent tends to take advantage of every minute they have with a grandchild.
4. (One of my husband's favorites) When your infant grandchild has a messy diaper and their parent asks if you could go change the baby's diaper as a grandparent you can say, "Nope. I'm the grandparent and I don't have to do that."
5. When your grandchild is hurt, for whatever reason, as a grandparent you feel that pain twice as much when you see that it is hurting that child's parent as well.
6. When you become a grandparent you are given a very special story telling gift. Rather than reading a book we have the ability to dig into the recesses of our memories and come up with the most wonderful tales of adventure that leave that grandchild saying, "Tell me another story, NaNa."
7. As a grandparent chocolate is one of the 4 major food groups. As a parent.....not so much.
8. As a parent you can sit "criss cross applesauce" in the floor with the children and in an instant jump up to a full standing position and walk normally. As a grandparent you can't jump up quite so fast and you walk a little wobbly until your hip joints get readjusted.
9. As a grandparent you have the ability to kiss the hurts of the grandchildren and in an instant make them all better. The parent can be in the same room, but the grandchild has a way of knowing whose kiss has more magic ability.
10. As a grandparent there is no other feeling to compare to when that grandchild wraps their arms tightly around you and nestles their little head in that "nook" between your head and shoulder. This is something though that I don't feel is a difference between parents and grandparents because no matter the size of the child, be they an adult or a toddler, there's just something about that "nook" and they just fit.



SEASONS OF CHANGE AND A CHANGE OF SEASONS

What do you think about when you hear the word "change"? The dictionary defines the word as "a transformation or transition from one state, condition, or phase to another. *the change of seasons.*" And if you look up the word "season" it is merely "any period of time."

What was the first season of change that took place in your life? You would think it would be the day of your natural birth, going from a womb to the natural world, but that wasn't it. Before you ever came into this natural world and took your first breath, you had already gone through your first "season". That development from conception to birth was and is a process of continuous change, a period lasting about 40 weeks ie: a "season". When you think about it, after our birth our life is then another process of continuous change, but full of many different seasons.

I believe with my whole heart that the development within the womb is a process that is guided by God's hand. Psalm 139 13-14 says *"For you created my inmost being; **you knit me together in my mother's womb.** I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, your works are wonderful, I know that full well."* But who takes over the continued development and nurturing of our little bodies after our natural birth? What other "change" happens here simultaneously with a baby's birth?

In a matter of seconds a baby is born, his first season changes, and he becomes totally and completely dependant on an earthly parent. At the same time another season changes and the woman ceases to become just a wife and now becomes a mother. Together with her husband, who is now a father, they become totally and completely responsible for this baby.

Through out the time that the parents raise that child he will go through many seasons or better called "phases" when relating to children. I'm watching this happen right before my eyes, once again, as I watch my grandchildren grow. My daughter has asked me the same question I'm sure I asked my mother, "Are they ever going to stop doing this?" I can't count the times that I have told all my girls that their children will continue to go through these phases until they leave their home.

The one difference in watching these phases as a grandparent versus a parent is that I've read the end of the book on this one. I know by my own experience that these little mini seasons do cease eventually. Sometimes they come on suddenly, last for short or long periods of time and then leave as quickly as they came. Some of these seasons can be very pleasant and you bask in the sunshine of them, but then there are those that aren't so pleasant, in fact even painful and you wonder if it will ever pass or change.

When you become a child you eventually do change into an adult. Although after reaching adulthood you forever remain an adult, you do go through seasons of aging. As a wife, good Lord willing, you will remain a wife "until death do you part", but that is a choice. You can cease to become a wife by one means or another if you so choose that option.

But, when you reach parenthood there are no options out, no escape clause; for this “change of seasons” is permanent. Once I became a mother I will forever be a mother. Even if I were to legally “disown” my own children (only making a point here) it still would not change the fact that on June the 11th in the year 1982 I gave birth to my first child and forever entered into the role of motherhood. And once my children had children I again had a change of seasons and entered into another new and permanent season, that of being a NaNa.

Just as spring is one of my favorite natural seasons, this new season as a grandparent is one of my favorites so far. Watching these precious children grow and change with each passing month is like watching all the “newness” of spring.

When reflecting, however, on our natural weather seasons we know that every season is not always pleasant. We have often even seen the tragic effects that the changing seasons can have on our weather. We have either experienced these effects personally ourselves or we have been an observer through the realm of the media. Both can result in the experience of pain and sadness, be it first hand or through feeling compassion for another. But as God’s word says, ***“To every thing there is a season; and a time to every purpose under heaven” Eccleastes 3:1***

One constant and reassuring fact through out our lives is that although many things around us do change God does not. *Malachi 3:6 For **I am the Lord; I change not.*** From that first “knitting” completed by our heavenly Father, he is always and evermore in control. That first period of “change” that we experienced for those 40 weeks ended in the birth of a new life. From that moment of birth and throughout our lives we are going through another “knitting” process; a process that will someday, for those that are born again Christians, will end in the most miraculous new life ever dreamed!

Blessings!
NaNa Paula

May I introduce the **LOVES** of my life?



Faith Ariah – Faith is 4 years old and the oldest of my 4 grandchildren. She is the daughter of my daughter Mandy and her husband Mark. She has strawberry blonde hair, cute little cheeks and blue eyes. She loves to talk and has a very large vocabulary for a 4 year old. She being my first grandchild was given the privilege of naming me NaNa pronounced as in ba..NaNa. She is currently my bedtime buddy as she and her family are living with me until their “brand new house” (as she calls it) is finished. She and I sleep in the same room and in the same bed most nights. We read books and sing songs every night. In fact she won’t go to sleep unless I’m singing to her. She loves to sing and

has inherited her mother’s vocal talent. She can sing on key and can change keys in the middle of a song. She can make up words to a song and sing it in the tune of another song. Her favorite toy right now is her water baby Ariel. She loves anything to do with The Little Mermaid and loves to sing the part in the movies where Ariel sings the “ah ah ah’s” and goes up in key. She can do it perfectly.



Rylan Joseph – Rylan is 3 years old and the second of my grandchildren and my only grandson. He is the son of my son Joey and his wife Christina. He has brown hair and hazel eyes. Rylan, too, has a very good vocabulary for a 3 year old. He began talking at 18 months and hasn’t stopped since. His 2 favorite words right now are “Why?” and “What?” Believe me; he gets more use out of those two little words than all my babies combined right now. But, how else will he learn if he doesn’t ask, right? His favorite toys are anything Transformer or Power Ranger. Seeing as how I’m babysitting Rylan and his sister 2 or 3 days a week I get to spend a lot of time with them. Rylan likes for me to read

books and sing, too, but he really enjoys it when NaNa gets on the floor and plays with the race track or cars or better yet sword fights with the nerf swords wearing the Optimus Prime helmet on her head!



Haylee Celeste – Haylee is 1 year old (2 in March) and the third of my grandchildren. She is the daughter of my son Joey and his wife Christina. She has curly brunette hair with highlights of copper, big brown eyes and those adorable chubby cheeks. She is my Haylee “bug”, a nickname she’s had since she was really small. She is just beginning to put two or three words together now and loves to talk just as much as the other two. She is little Miss Manners and says “da doo” or “thank you” to just about everything. If I change her diaper she says, “Thank you”. If I wipe her nose she says, “Thank you.” Anything you do for her she says, “Thank you.” Her favorite toys right now are her baby doll and

their “lanks” or blankets. I gave her a doll stroller for Christmas and she plays with it and her babies most of the day. A favorite past time of her is seeing how many times she can get NaNa to buckle and

unbuckle anything she can find that has a buckle. She, too, loves to sing and to be sung to. One of her favorites is “Jesus Loves Me”



Alexis Paige – “Lexi” is 2 months old and is my youngest granddaughter as well as the youngest of all my grandchildren. She is the daughter of my daughter Mandy and her husband Mark. So far her hair looks like it is going to be strawberry blonde and her eyes are, and will be, blue (most likely) considering both parents are blonde and blue eyed. She is a little mini Faith. She looks just like her big sister did at this age. She has recently, in the past 2 or 3 weeks, begun to smile quite a bit and tonight in fact laughed at her mommy for the very first time when she played peek a boo with her. She is almost too young for me to give an adequate assessment of her personality yet except to say that

she is very active and loud sometimes when she is awake. I’m sure over the next couple of months her personality will become very apparent.



Kadence Nicole – Kadence is the first of my “greats”. She is 2 years old, my first great niece and the daughter of my oldest niece, [Melissa](#) and her husband, Jay. She has blonde hair and blue eyes. I was blessed to be outside the hospital room door when she was born. To Kadence and most all my nieces and nephews I am known also as NaNa, however pronounced “Nonna”. Her mommy was actually the first one to give me this name and pronunciation. One word that best describes Kadence would be...“active”. I’ve never seen a young child with so much energy. She is literally never still unless asleep or in a car seat, both of which are welcome events for her mom. She can say just about anything she

wants and is very bright. She loves to talk to NaNa on the phone and I am blessed that she lives close enough (in OKC) to me that I do get to see her occasionally. She is an only child, so far, and really loves it when NaNa gets to bring Faith, or Sissy as she calls her, with her to play.



Kaleb Vaughn – Kaleb is the second of my greats. He was born on my birthday and is 18 months old now. He is my first great nephew and the son of my niece [Tara](#) and her husband Jason. He is very blonde with blue eyes and a real cutie. He is learning to say everything and is very “boyish”. He loves trucks, trains, puppies and the stick horse that NaNa gave him for Christmas. Although he was born in south Texas he and his parents now live in the Texas panhandle and only 4 hours away from me. That may sound far, but OKC is right in the middle between Tara and me. So we Sapulpa girls and kiddos can meet Melissa, Tara and their kiddos without too far to drive. Kaleb is also an only child (so far)

and is beginning to enjoy all of his cousins that he is close in age with. He doesn’t talk to NaNa on the phone too much yet, but I’m sure he will soon.



Brylee Anne – Brylee is my niece, the daughter of my brother Billy and his wife Jill. She is 5 years old, with blonde hair and hazel eyes. She calls me NaNa as pronounced by my grandchildren. It was just easier for her to do that when she moved here because she lived closer to my grandchildren than any of her other cousins. She and her family moved here from Pennsylvania in November of 06. She began kindergarten this past August and loves school. She goes to Sunday School and church with me every Sunday and our church has adopted her. She is very, very active and absolutely loves to sing. She is very smart and passed the schools little “test” to get into kindergarten without ever

having taken any preschool classes. She loves computer games and music cd’s. Every time we get in the car she says, “Turn on the music, NaNa”. She has a very soft and tender heart and is exposed to many things in her home that hurt that heart. She continues to love in spite of it all and is going to grow up to be a very sweet young lady.



Micah Joseph – Micah is my adopted grandson and is 5 months old. He is the only son (so far) of [Candi](#), whom I consider to be one of my daughters, and Jesse. He has blue eyes, but not a whole lot of hair yet. I don’t get to see this little one very often as he and his family live close to Dallas. His mommy and daddy moved there almost a year ago now, but they do come home for visits and always make sure that Micah gets to see NaNa. He has an infectious smile and loves to squeal and jump up and down on anyone’s lap. He likes smiling for the cell phone camera so mommy can send pictures of him to me and has recently begun to say, “Da Da”. He’s trying to sit up now, too. He’s getting to that age of trying

mommy’s patience and is beginning to learn all about boundaries. I am very thrilled to have another grandson and I know Rylan and Kaleb are too. They were beginning to get outnumbered with all these girls.

Well, there you have it, the flowers in my bouquet and the **LOVES** of my life. With the theme for this month’s magazine being love, I couldn’t think of a better way to demonstrate my love a grandparent. I hope you have enjoyed getting to know a little bit more about each of these precious babies. I am having the time of my life getting to know them myself and am looking forward to seeing what God does with each and every life.

Blessings!

[NaNa Paula](#)

“Every child born into the world is a new thought of God, an ever fresh and radiant possibility.” Kate Douglas Wiggin