

A MOTHER-IN-LAW & GOD'S GRACE!

[This was written 8½ years ago & the mother-in-law in this story is now with the LORD, & breathing a sigh of relief!]

My Mother-in-law and I have lived under the same roof now for about 16 years (at the time of writing this). We decided to combine houses about four years after my Father-in-law died, because her house had been robbed 3 or 4 times. (The last time the thieves broke in, they stole, among other things, my brother-in-law's underwear! It was bizarre!! The morning after the robbery, when he opened his dresser drawer to take them out for his shower, they were gone!) On another occasion, while my Mother-in-law was in her front yard, a stranger pushed her down, grabbed her purse and ran off with it. So...we sold both our houses, and bought another one together in a safer location.

It has been an adventure! My Mother-in-law and I are as different as night and day. When my husband was very young, she began praying for a wife for him. Maybe the LORD rolled His eyes and thought, "Dear Woman, what you really need to be asking Me for is an abundance of grace to go with this prayer request of yours!! I've already got the girl picked out. She's just right for this son of yours, and I'm bringing her from the ends of the earth, and I'll make her part of your family team; but....she is going to be one part of the body and you are an entirely different part with a different function, and it's going to take an abundance of My grace for the two of you to work together. See, she's the perspiring arm pit that keeps the body cool, and you are the nose! My grace is the hand that washes the arm pit and rolls on the deodorant! My grace is also the hand that brings the handkerchief to the nose in order to clean out the nostrils so that the nose can keep smelling, and filtering the air that goes in and out of the body. My grace is the hand that rubs the nose when it is itching, and pinches it shut when the smell is too strong. My grace is the fingers on the hands that rub the sav into wounds at the entrance of the nose, and My grace is the fingers on the hands that rub in sav into the chaffed arm pits".

As I said before, we are very different from each other, even though we both love God. When it comes to dealing with clothing and make-up, we are worlds apart! Her mentality in this department is prissy. Mine is practical! She has feet like a little English fairy___ long and narrow and pointed and small, and better adapted for creatures who fly, than creatures who walk! She could probably fit her feet into any pair of shoes you could find on the market in her size seven and a half, except that she has to wear orthotics with them. I, on the other hand, have feet just like a troll doll ... one of those cute little troll dolls with the long hair and the smiley faces. My feet are wide across the toes....(all 5 toes by the grace of God!...troll dolls have 4 toes!). They look like real feet! I can easily wear a man's size 11, and usually do. I grip the ground well with my feet! I like that verse that says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news". But try buying prissy, feminine looking shoes that will work with my feet. It starts there between my Mother-in-law and I.

Then it goes to the type of material we wear. She likes things that are 'synthetic wash-n-

wear', or 'dry clean only', clothes that say, "Here's a woman who is sophisticated and classy, and knows what she's doing!" If she had her way, she would iron everything! As for me, I don't particularly care for synthetic material! It makes my skin feel like it's crawling. It doesn't absorb perspiration, and let you cool down during the evaporation process. (This is really bad, especially when one has the designated task of being an arm pit!!) In the winter time it doesn't hold the heat in. Besides, why would anybody want to wear something that has been dead for over 4000 years? After all, aren't synthetic clothes made out of petroleum products? When I'm teaching, I wear jean skirts long enough that I can wear a pair of jeans underneath, because it gets well below freezing in winter around here! Do I look sophisticated and business like? Probably not! (One of my youngest students used to refer to me as 'Mrs. Moon Boots' when I was out of ear shot.) My Mother-in-law and I are very different in that respect. The things in clothes that she holds so dear, I disregard and hold in contempt, and visa versa.

Oh, and then it gets to make-up I can't wear it because it messes up the pH balance of my skin. However, on one occasion I did get into wearing 'the eye-brow pencil thing'...It was after I asked my dear husband to trim my bangs/fringe. He took his beard trimmer, being the practical man that he is, and proceeded to trim my bangs with it. Then he exclaimed, "Oh no!!" Somehow he had managed to shave off half of each eye-brow in the process_

Now my Mother-in-law, on the other hand, spends time on her face!! She has so, all her adult life. She uses 3 different kinds of liquid on her face just to clean and condition it, and then she powders herself all up for church!! On more than one occasion, she has given me a lecture on the benefits of her ritual, and has also informed other female members of our family on how I needed to emulate her procedures! She used to use eye-brow pencil, but lately, because of her eye site, we really try to discourage her because it makes her look like one of the 'munsters' on 'The Adam's Family'. One day I was in a hurry, and she was still working on the make-up thing. (At this stage of her life, it could take her 2 hours or more.) Being the gracious daughter-in-law that I am, I said to her, "Oh Mom, why do you want to put all that caulking on your face? Your skin is beautiful! Why would you want to cover it up? Then I pulled her wheel chair away from the table, and handed her, her 'old lady' lip-stick as I rolled her out the door to go to church.

It goes on from there. I weigh at least twice as much as she does. When I was young, I was a little dismayed at having broad football player type shoulders, but now I appreciate them, because they give me the ability to pick up my frail little Mother-in-law and carry her when the need arises (It's what you call being able to pick your Mother-in-law up and put her in her place!). When I first got married 24 years ago, my own Mum lived in Australia (& still does), so my Mother-in-law became my Mother too. As a new bride, she was the first one I went to, to ask for advice. She was a storehouse of wisdom. She taught me many things. I also learned how to be Christ like by the way she lived. I used to see her self-sacrificing attitude towards my Father-in-law, and I would get so irritated at his treatment of her, but she never wavered, & when things got tough, she choose to be conformed to the image of Christ instead of walking away.... and three months before he died, he got his

heart right with the LORD. All her children are walking with the LORD. Now she is working on her grandchildren. Her youngest son loves to tell the story of how when they were kids and fighting constantly with each other, Mom would walk into the room with her Bible in hand, and start vehemently rebuking the unclean spirits. She even opened up their drawers & closets to rebuke the spirits! Then my brother-in-law and his siblings would get real quiet for about a week, because they decided that they had gone too far and had pushed Mom just a little bit off the deep end!! Of course he is telling it from his perspective! When my Mother-in-law tells the story, she says it worked, 'cause they all stopped fighting!

When she first started going down hill, one night she got up at about 2 am, and slipped on the bathroom rug, and didn't have strength enough to get herself back up. She didn't even have the strength to turn herself over! So she lay there and sang to the LORD for several hours, 'till I went in there and found her. She said, "I've been singing every hymn I could think of!!

All this is to say, for the past 16 years I have prayed many times, "O LORD, please give me the grace to live with my Mother-in-law, and O God, give her the grace to live with me!!" He has!

Grace is undeserved favor. How much do I deserve my Mother-in-law to be gracious towards me, when I have just asked her why she was putting caulking all over her face? If my husband shaves my eyebrows off, should I still take him his coffee in the morning? Should I still be a blessing to a child who refers to me as 'Mrs. Moon Boots' when I am out of ear shot? Oh yes! Why? Because the LORD took our place and bore the punishment for all the sins that we have committed against Him and each other. (He loves us unconditionally!) The scripture says, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD". Grace is a 2 fold thing. First it is God's ability to put up with you. It is something that He chooses to do. The Messiah grew up with this ability. John 1:14 says He was full of grace and truth. We don't deserve His favor towards us. The second part is that He gives us the ability to go through the impossible. It was His grace that gave my Mother-in-law the ability to sing while she was lying all those hours on that cold bathroom floor. It's God's grace that gives different members of the body of Christ the ability to get along with each other, even when they comprehend things from totally different points of view like my Mother-in-law and I. Stephen in Acts 7:60, while he was being stoned to death, cried out, "LORD, don't charge this sin against them. John Browne in 1517, while being burned alive at the stake for his faith, folded his hands and began singing "O LORD, I yield me to Thy grace, Grant me mercy for my trespass; Let never the fiend my soul chase. LORD, I will bow, and Thou shalt beat, Let never my soul come in hell-heat." Noah received God's grace 2 fold. First, through God's grace, he survived the trials of the pre-flood world and built the Ark. Second, it was the LORD's undeserved favor that allowed him and the seven others to survive The Flood. Walking in God's grace reaps a bountiful harvest that is beyond measure...