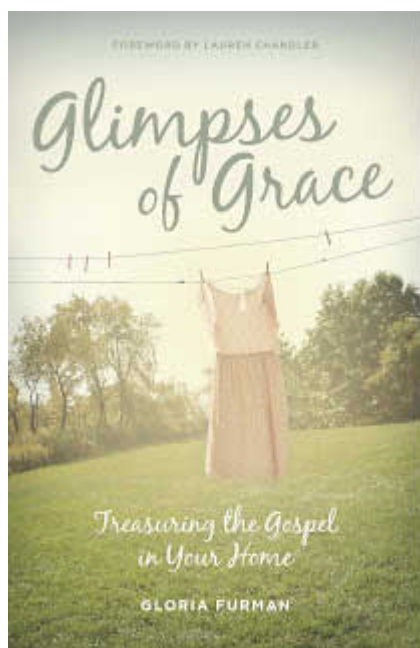


# Glimpses of Grace: Knocking Down Mental Walls

One of the most spiritually dangerous mistakes we can make is to compartmentalize our thinking into separate sections: Facts/values. Sacred/secular.

Worst of all, God/real life.

If Jesus truly is Lord—and His word says He is—then there is not so much as a solitary atom, much less an entire compartment, where He does not belong. So I love, love, love it when writers and speakers help us tear down mental and spiritual walls to help us live life as a unified whole. And now there's a new voice to help women think biblically and rightly about how we glorify God in our homes.



This week marks the release of Gloria Furman's book *Glimpses of Grace: Treasuring the Gospel in Your Home*. I've never read a book that so thoroughly explores the way God's grace can so fully and vibrantly radiate into even the most mundane and seemingly unimportant parts of life.

This, on top of the fact that Gloria is a mom of three little

ones with a fourth on the way, a pastor's wife, living in Dubai—and her husband Dave's physical strength is severely compromised, which of course means life is harder for Gloria. So yeah—I'm impressed. But Gloria's bio doesn't hold a candle to her wisdom, her grasp of theology, and what I especially appreciate, a breathtaking level of transparency and authenticity that eloquently communicates, "I'm messed up and I desperately need Jesus, but let me show you how He's so good!"

Her great, dry sense of humor is studded throughout the book, such as: "I need God's grace and something baked with peanut butter and chocolate." What's not to love?

Some of my highlighted passages, which I wanted to share with you:

- 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."
- 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.
- Jesus apparently believes that the most satisfying thing for us in all eternity is to behold his glory in his very presence. He is not absent from our noisy, chaotic lives. He is with us, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). And if he's with us even to the end of the age, then he is with us even to the end of our carpooling route. He's with us even to the end of the meat in the fridge when grocery day isn't for another four days. He's with us even to the end of a

long night of waking with a crying baby. He's with us even to the end of a party that we'd rather not be at or be hosting, for whatever reason. He's with us even to the end of a hectic morning of rushing around trying to get out the door. He's with us even to the end of a dreadful day when nothing seemed to go as planned.

- God's efficacious grace could be described in terms of the different ways you put pajamas on a baby. My son prefers to streak after he takes baths. He even tries to climb out of the tub early before everyone is soaped up and rinsed in order to increase his odds of getting to run around in his birthday suit. . . . But it's all fun and games until a naked baby has an accident on the carpet, so I quickly chase him down to put on his diaper. Some nights he runs away shrieking and hides under tables and behind chairs trying to avoid the inevitable. Some nights he quietly lies on the bed while I diaper him, and he might even stretch his legs into the pajamas I hold up. Either way, whether I have to wrestle his clothes onto him or he peacefully submits to the work I am doing, that boy has never gone to bed without a diaper and pajamas on. Of course, we should love to submit to God's efficacious grace as he purposes to make us more like Christ! But sometimes we're like a naked baby hiding behind the couch, reluctant to hold still and thankfully allow God to work in our hearts and get us ready for what he has next.

- We're destined for joy forever because of Christ's exquisite hospitality in opening a way to God through his own body. We can serve others with gladness, knowing that the carrots we peel and the diapers we change are as unto the Lord. . . . When we show hospitality in this way, we can see how "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). Our role is to serve with the strength God supplies, and it's God's role to do with our service whatever he pleases. He supplies the

strength, and in his abundant hospitality he also gives us joy! God's grace in Christ is for us to enjoy and share with others. When I have this grace in mind, I can see my possessions and others' needs in light of eternity.

- My disgusting kitchen floor and its propensity to absorb filth is a picture of our hearts. No matter how hard we scrub, we cannot erase our iniquity. The shame of our sin is like the phantom stain on a shirt that reappears after you've dried it. The stain is deep in the fibers of the shirt, and when the right temperature of heat is applied, the stain rises to the surface of the fabric. The stain is permanent.

- Not making an idol out of our homes is tricky. I've personally experienced what it feels like to be obsessed with the idea of organization in my home. I thought I was being driven by the maxim "God is a God of order and not chaos." I thought that if everything had a place, then my heart would feel at peace because strict orderliness is godly. But instead of worshiping God, I just wanted to be in control. I was worshiping my image and thought it wouldn't be so bad if others admired me, too. . . .I've also had struggles with the idol of self-expression, seeing my home primarily as an extension of myself. If something was out of place or not just so, then I felt it reflected poorly on my personhood or character. Again I was serving my own image—not God's.

- Jesus is the sovereign Lord over every square centimeter in your home—from the pipes to the television to the mattresses. He is Lord over it, and he desires that you use what he's given you to glorify him. That doesn't mean that your home needs to be perfect by the world's standards or even by your own personal standards, but consecrated by God's standards. . . . In Romans 12:1-2 we see a description of what it means to set ourselves apart for God: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to

present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Since Jesus is lord over all things and God is subjecting all things under his feet (1 Cor. 15:27), including our homes, by his grace we use our homes to worship him.

See why I loved this book? Let the gospel permeate every square inch of your heart and your home. I bet *Glimpses of Grace* can help.

This blog post originally appeared at  
[blogs.bible.org/glimpses-of-grace-knocking-down-mental-walls/](https://blogs.bible.org/glimpses-of-grace-knocking-down-mental-walls/)  
on June 4, 2013.

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## Mothering Little Men from Mars

One of the greatest privileges of my life—right after saying “yes” to Jesus and “I do” to my husband—has been mothering my two sons, now 20 and 22.

Several years ago, my husband Ray and I started researching gender differences and discovered the truths in John Gray’s mega-bestseller, [\*Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus\*](#). It didn’t take long for us to realize that we didn’t have gender-free *children*; we had little men from Mars! And then I started realizing why I sometimes unnecessarily frustrated my kids and

why we didn't connect all the time—because I'm from Venus and they're from Mars, and there is a HUGE gender gap between masculine and feminine! John Gray didn't discover it; God created it, with great delight and a big smile on His face.

For example, boys, being male, are wired to be **self-reliant**. They act like they get extra brownie points for doing something on their own. One of my son Curt's first whole sentences was, "**I** do it!" For boys, accepting help is perceived as weakness. For us relationally-oriented ladies, offering and accepting help is a way to make a heart-connection with another person. So when I would say, "Let Mommy help you," they would be offended and I never knew why. If I could do it over again, I would tell them, "Let's see if you can do it on your own. If it doesn't work, I'll be glad to help."

One of the most powerful lessons I've learned about mothering boys is that the male mind is linear, life is handled only one piece at a time. This impacts both their thinking and activity.

Males tend to think on one thing at a time. I now know that when my husband or sons are reading, it's not safe to start a conversation until I get their attention and they're looking at me. I used to frustrate the dickens out of my sons on soccer game days when they were dressed in their soccer uniforms, their soccer bags were packed, they had their game face on, and there were 15 minutes left before we had to leave. And I, being the ever-efficient one, would try to get them to use that time wisely to clean up the living room or fold laundry. They never, ever, cooperated willingly! And now I know why. I'd love to go back and change that part of mothering.

This linear approach also has a major impact on their activity. They are created to **do one thing at a time** before moving on to the next event. If I wanted their attention while

they were watching TV, I would have to physically stand in front of the screen to break their attention and have them look at me. I, on the other hand, am a natural multi-tasker, because if mothers couldn't do more than one thing at a time, humanity wouldn't last more than one generation. So I would have conversations with my boys or direct homework while doing the dishes or cooking or a multitude of other things. I finally realized that because my kids can't multi-task, they never believed that I was actually paying attention to them if my hands were busy.

Knowing this, I have learned that when they start to tell me something, I put down whatever I'm doing, turn my body to face them squarely, and give them my full physical attention. It's been wonderful to see the difference; they now *feel* I am truly listening. I've shared this insight with several of my friends, who report that it's made a major difference with the boys in their homes as well. Their girls never gave it a thought, because girls intuitively know you can wash dishes and talk at the same time!

Where girls are more verbal, boys are usually **more physical**. I have a friend who wanted her boys to always move quietly and slowly like girls, and had a "no rough-housing" rule in the house. This is the fast track to killing a boy's heart, because boys were made to wrestle and tumble and be loud. This isn't a design defect. It's the way God was pleased to make them. While it's not good to break lamps, of course, boys need to be able to MOVE while their moms smile and let them be who they were made to be.

Another thing I'd go back and change is trying to pry conversations out of my sons. I didn't understand that females naturally generate three times as many words as males, and we talk to build community and knit hearts together. Boys and **men talk for one reason: to convey facts and information**. If they don't have anything to convey, they don't talk. A wise counselor finally explained to me that if I waited for my sons

to initiate conversations on their timetable, I would get what my heart longed for. I also learned that one of my son's love languages is physical touch, and if I would go in at the beginning or the end of the day and silently rub his back, he would often start talking. It's amazing what meaningful conversations can happen at bedtime when the kids are trying to forestall sleep!

John Gray says, and it's my experience as well, that a **man's primary need is to be respected**. It starts when they're very small boys. When a boy's mother shows him respect, especially when it's backed by a father's respect, that fills boys' "respect buckets." Because they are made in the image of God, that alone makes them infinitely valuable and precious and worthy of great respect and dignity. I showed them respect by giving them significant choices, and honoring those choices. It started with choosing their clothes and making various school-related choices, and grew into choices like room colors and what sports they would pursue. I showed them respect by listening to them and not interrupting, by not being sarcastic, and by not saying shaming and condemning things. My son has commented that it's important to remember that kids are "little MEN from Mars," and not talk down to them as inferior beings simply because they are not adults. He is glad we didn't do it, but it really bothers him when he sees grown-ups do it to kids.

One last thing I've learned lately is the importance of supporting and cherishing our children's gender to help them grow into healthy adults. Little **boys need to know that being a boy is a good thing**, and of course the same holds true for girls. After sharing this with a group of mothers of preschoolers, one friend took her little boy for a walk down to the lake. Along the way she said, "Parker, let's look for frogs and toads. Mommy is so glad God made you a little boy so you could like yucky things like frogs and toads." When they got back to the house, his grandmother asked, "So how was your



walk?" and Parker said, "Mommy's glad that I'm a boy because I like yucky things like frogs and toads."

When my first son was born, my mother told me that mothers and sons, and fathers and daughters, have a very special relationship. She was so very right, and I thank the Lord for His good, so very good, gift of my sons.

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## The Mother Heart of God

Two days ago we observed Mother's Day in the US. I think Mother's Day matters to God because mothers matter to God. And I think mothers matter to God beyond their necessity for bringing new life into the world, but because women reflect an aspect of God's heart in ways men cannot.

Every aspect of our femininity, it seems to me, comes from God originally. He made females in His image with the feminine attributes and strengths that come straight from the Father heart of God.

The essence of our femininity is expressed in two main ways: responding and nurturing.

One of the most wonderful promises in God's word says, "Call to Me, and I will answer." He says this multiple times, and multiple ways! God is a responsive God. And it honors and glorifies Him when WE respond—to Him, and to others.

Nurture shares the same root word as nurse. I am fascinated by one of the Old Testament names for God, El Shaddai. El means

“strong one,” and Shaddai is a form of the word for the breast. El Shaddai means “The strong breasted one. “

El Shaddai is the mother heart . . . of God the Father. It’s from the Father we receive a mother’s heart.

I acknowledge that Mother’s Day is painful for some women, especially those who long to be mothers and aren’t. But the heart of a mother isn’t about having given birth. It’s an attitude of the heart, a desire and willingness to nurture others.

El Shaddai longs to nurture and nurse us, if we’ll let Him, and He longs to draw us into an intimate embrace with Him.

I have seen Him bring healing to the hearts of many people as they pressed hard into His breast to receive nurture and comfort. . . and identity. His love is powerful enough to transform a heart that is so riddled with holes that it’s like a spaghetti strainer, and when His love functions like Super Glue to plug up the holes, people’s hearts are transformed into vessels that can hold His love—as well as people’s—instead of draining out. As they receive nursing and nurturing from The Strong Breasted One, He loves and provides for them. I’ve watched it happen multiple times.

I am so grateful for the responsive, nurturing “Mother heart of God”!

This blog post originally appeared at  
[blogs.bible.org/engage/sue\\_bohlin/the\\_mother\\_heart\\_of\\_god](https://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/the_mother_heart_of_god)

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[Listen to Sue’s message on this topic given at a Dallas-area church](#)

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# Supernatural Parenting

*Sue Bohlin points out that we can be supernatural parents when we are relying on a supernatural God for direction and strength. It is important that we include parenting as an integral part of our Christian worldview. Applying a biblical perspective is crucial to imparting the truth needed for our children to live truly successful lives.*

There are certain universal truths in parenting.

- If you hook a dog leash over a ceiling fan, the motor is not strong enough to rotate a 42 pound boy wearing Pound Puppy underwear and a Superman cape. It is strong enough, however, to spread paint on all four walls of a twenty by twenty foot room.
- If you use a waterbed as home plate while wearing baseball shoes it does not leak—it explodes. A king size waterbed holds enough water to fill a 2000 square foot house four inches deep.
- The spin cycle on the washing machine does not make earth worms dizzy. It will, however, make cats dizzy.
- Cats throw up twice their body weight when dizzy.

Dr. Dobson says that parenting isn't for cowards. It ain't such a hot job for mere mortals, either. What a daunting task—being completely responsible for an infant who cannot do a single thing for himself except make a lot of noise and a lot of dirty diapers! Teaching them to walk. And talk. And act like civilized human beings. Even more importantly, their eternal destiny is in our hands, and we have the awesome opportunity to show them what God is like, and to lead them to

saving faith in Christ!

Praise God, as believers we're not limited to our own strength and power. Christ died for us, to give His life to us, to live HIS life THROUGH us. We can parent with the same supernatural energy that raised Christ from the dead. We can parent with the same infinite supply of wisdom and patience that Jesus had. We can let Him parent through us—we can be supernatural parents!

The Bible says that Christ is our life. What does that mean when you're about to change your fourteenth diaper today? "Lord Jesus, I don't have the stomach or the strength to do this, so You change this diaper through me. Here are my hands—use them—here's my face—show love to my baby by smiling through me."

"I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." What does that mean when you've been giving, giving, giving all day and you're on empty? "Lord, I'm empty and weak and out of resources. You be strong in my weakness. I will do this in Your strength because I don't have any left."

"For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." How do we live that out in parenting kids who would rather snarl at us than look at us, who have swallowed the junior-high-culture's dictum that the only good parent is a dead parent? "Lord Jesus, Thank You for giving me this child. I choose to remember she is a gift and not a punishment. I don't have what it takes to be kind today, Lord. You be kind in me. I cannot love this child today, Lord, so You channel Your perfect love through me. I am Your willing vessel but I'm fresh out of unconditional love and acceptance. So You be a loving and wise parent through me."

You can be a supernatural parent. Even without a Superman cape.

