

Unfailing Grace

IN SHARED
DAILY BLESSINGS



How You Can See And Use The Gifts God Has Given You,
Open Yourself To Being An Instrument In Everyday Life, And
Experience Sacred Moments Of Unfailing Grace

By Julie Carrick

What does a Protestant obstetrician named Wesley Harris, a Catholic recording artist named Julie Carrick, a Mormon videographer named Corey Clifford, a young lady named Callie, and a United States airman named Paul Carrick all have in common? They all shared their gifts and stories to help others see the incredible gift of life. This is a short story of true ecumenism and the gift of grace.

I was sitting in my office having a cup of tea. My telephone rang and it was an obstetrician from Tennessee by the name of Dr. Wesley Harris. He'd had a patient come into his office who was seeing her baby for the first time in an ultrasound. When Jenny saw her little one on the screen, she literally rejoiced out loud in the same words that the mother of Jesus used. She said, "My soul proclaims the greatness of our God and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

Then, this young girl asked Dr. Wes a question that changed his perspective on everyday holiness. She asked the doctor, "Can you imagine if Mary had been able to see an ultrasound of Jesus?"

Dr. Wes was profoundly moved by such a powerful question. He went home and wrote the song *Count Me Blessed*, a song about the joyous acceptance of new life from the perspective of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. From Luke's gospel 1:46—49 we hear her canticle or, as it is also known, Mary's Song, as she declares the greatness of the Lord and how she rejoices in God because of the great gift of life she will bear. This beautiful song takes Mary's words along with what Jenny was feeling since she, too, literally rejoiced aloud as she saw her baby in the ultrasound.

This songwriter-doctor then searched for recording artists who could help him bring his song to life. He asked me if I would record the song with my band, and I was only too happy and honored to say yes.

There was a moment on that phone call when he suggested that maybe I could not only record the song but also be in the music video...in an obstetrical setting where I would look into the screen at an ultrasound of a baby. The only problem: I was 53 by that point! Once we both stopped laughing, realizing that I was not the person to be the model for the music video, I asked him if I could take some time to ponder how we could make this happen.

Through the collaboration, we held a space for so many people to bring their gifts to a common gift for life. This beautiful Protestant obstetrician, who wrote the song, contacted a Catholic recording artist and speaker, who then hired a wonderful Mormon young man, a skilled music video producer. Then, a young lady from my parish and even my son, Paul, said yes to being a part of the music video.

Utilizing all of these gifts together made such a phenomenal gift of grace. Each of us can look at our life as one of those threads in a tapestry but then realize every single life reaches out to other tapestries. In my life, I am one of the threads that makes up the strength and beauty of the cloth, but then each and every other person I come in contact with is also one of the threads that has their own separate story made up of

all kinds of other people and all of their stories. Our lives are intertwined and each of us is filled with grace, such a powerful and beautiful and life-giving grace. Each of us is a gift that is meant to be shared.

As I began the music video production and thought, "How can I share all of the stories and bring them together into one purpose?" I sat down at my piano with the pregnancy test from the memory box of my son, Paul, who is now a full-grown man serving in the United States Air Force. As the video begins, I look at that little lifeline in the window and his entire life is about to flash before my eyes. At the same time, Jenny, the girl in the obstetrical office, is about to look into that window into the womb to see her child and realize his life is just beginning.

In the next scene, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is looking at her abdomen as it begins to swell as her child grows bigger and then realizing that his life is going to change everything for mankind. That he will be born and raised up and he will be our Savior. He journeys along in life just simply being friend and teacher and ultimately Savior. His life depicted so beautifully in the song shows the simplicity of simply being present.

One of my favorite moments in the music video is the second where Mary exhales with such a peaceful expression and it crossfades to the face of Jesus as he exhales and we experience the breath of life. The moment that depicts the Garden of Gethsemane knowing he will give his life and then Mary once more sitting in the stable pondering her pregnancy is so powerful. Callie, who plays the part of Jenny and Mary, shows us that we can begin early in life to share our talents and gifts of grace. My granddaughter, Madison Paige, teaches we are never too young to be bearers of grace. Watching her play the part of baby Jesus and Jenny's baby was precious.

There is one clip in the music video where you see Corey's wife as she is holding her newborn. The ultrasound screen clips are literally the footage from his ultrasound when he was still in the womb. All of these simple beautiful lives work together for a common purpose of looking through the window of the ultrasound into the womb of new life and what is going to happen in the overall life of that person who will be born.

After watching the rapidly shared life story of my son, Paul, I myself was brought to tears at the end when I realized we started with the little plastic pregnancy test and so much life was lived with him in my day-to-day life, only to have to learn the lesson of letting go. We walk off together near the end of the music video, but even in the short time since it was released, he is now married and walks daily hand-in-hand with his bride, Chelsea.

As our group of gift-bearers moved together through recording to production and release of this beautiful song, I continued to reflect on the initial response of a positive pregnancy test, that it is so much more than a little pink line inside the window of a little oblong piece of plastic. That positive pregnancy test represents the beginning of an entire life of a human being. When I thought of each time I personally saw that little pink line in the window of the pregnancy test and then each of my children coming into my life, it was such an overwhelming feeling of absolute joy.

However, I know that is not always the case. There are many times when men and women face that little window of the pregnancy test and are very cautious or fearful or not knowing how to feel. The heart of Dr. Wes was to allow this song to bring such a joy through this window into the womb that when we see the baby, we can't help but fall joyously in love with him or her. Knowing that I was much too old to play the part of either Jenny or Mary, the mother of Jesus who is also part of the song, I felt like if I could share multiple journeys through this beautiful music video it would land its mark where it was supposed to.

When we bring our gifts together and use them to do good, it is amazing what happens. We have had in the few years since the release of the music video, over 50 women who have taken the time to send emails or notes to say that having watched this music video they chose life for their children instead of elective abortion. Those are just the ones who took the time to let us know; I'm sure there are countless others who have made that same decision for life. We must share our stories, just like how the young mom did in that obstetrical office as she allowed herself to rejoice. Just like how Dr. Wes took her words and turned them into such a beautiful song. Just like how I was privileged to record it with my band in Tennessee. And just like how Corey gave his gift of music video production. We all worked together to share this common story. I hope you enjoy *Count Me Blessed*.



Use your QR Reader to enjoy this powerful
and beautiful music video.

This particular song was written from the experience of Dr. Wesley Harris, and I was able to share a small part of its journey. When you read the book *Unfailing Grace*, you will read the actual stories of my life and the profound way God's grace has been revealed and used in my own journey. The songs that I have written from some of my journey go even deeper.

I invite you now, in this moment, to reflect on how you can see the gifts God has given you and use those gifts alongside others in your life for a more fulfilling and meaningful experience of everyday holiness.

1 Corinthians 12:12–31 speaks of the one body being made up of many parts. Each part is complete and has its purpose, but needs all the rest of the parts of the body to complete its mission. How incredible our world would be if each one of us could bring our particular gift to be used to the benefit of each other. One of the lessons I learned in the process of the work of *Count Me Blessed* was that daily I could see which part of the body I was called to use in that moment.

Here is my simple reflection.

Precious Lord, if today you ask me to use my hands to serve the hungry around me, let me be grateful for the feet of those with me who will carry me to where I will serve.

Precious Lord, if today you ask me to speak your message of truth to those doubting or bearing false witness, please let me see through the eyes of those who help me to see your word in order to better counsel in genuine love.

Precious Lord, if today you ask me to simply love, even though I have experienced pain by one of the parts of this body, I ask you to allow your Sacred Heart to be the heart of healing love beating in me.

Precious Lord, please make me aware if one of the parts of the body is in pain so that I may help to bring healing and when one part of the body has a joy that we may all celebrate its delight.

Good and gracious Lord, help me to be grateful for all the people around me whom you have filled with gift and grace. Please allow me to see that it is when we work together you will accomplish so much more than when we think we must do it alone.

I love how the next scripture to follow is 1 Corinthians 13:1--13 The Greatest Of These Is Love.

To complete the spiritual exercise above, simply read this whole passage but in the verses 4 through 7, exchange the word "love" or "it" with your name.

Love is patient, **love** is kind. **It** is not jealous, **love** is not pompous, **it** is not inflated, **it** is not rude, **it** does not seek its own interests, **it** is not quick-tempered, **it** does not brood over injury, **it** does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. **Love** bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Such marvelous things are done when we all share our gifts for the common good, allowing God's love to be the foundation of accomplishments.