

# Grace Soaked Soul

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## Battling but not without hope . . .

*For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.*  
1Timothy 4:10

I seem to learn more with each passing month and even day, that battles are very present in this life. We have had a few these past months. And though, my main battle is against my own flesh, against the “I want” or the “I’ll be happier if ...” mentality, and *for* a clearer focus on Christ’s eternal face and not the temporary; **I am not alone on the battle field.**

What sweet hope there is in knowing that . . . there is hope. In Christ. In the midst of battles, there is hope and rest and renewed strength. My hope is set on the living God. I am meditating on these beautiful wonders. There is hope in Christ. Opportunity to rest in Him during every moment of every day. There is renewed strength in His presence. O what beautiful truth: to be able to battle, to labor, with hope in Christ.

### Investing in People

Life’s plate has been full here and people have been the main dish. Allow me to share some of the recent “happenings”, some of the battles. Battles for the souls of the lost and in helping those who are already saved to fight against the flesh. Battles which have left us with some scars but *never, never* without hope.

Over the past several months, Baira has spent more than 20 hours a week in intensive Bible studies with us, asking questions in conversation and through email correspondence, and reading the Bible on her own. And,

as a result of God’s miraculous work, she has come to desire Christ and see her sin which separates her from full relationship with God. However, she also realized that this new life in Christ would cost her a current relationship which is forbidden by Christ. She evaluated and decided that she wants to have both that relationship and Christ. Currently, she’s working hard to justify her position, but eventually the divide will come . . . for Christ won’t take second place. Praise be to God that He doesn’t. Pray together with us that Baira will see the wonders of Christ and the fleeting filling up of earthly pleasures.

Other hours in the week have been spent nurturing relationship with Kristen, the American girl whom I’ve mentioned before. We have grown close as well,



hope

We just completed a very rich four day camp for the children of the church and some others. It was used in the lives of both children and adults. There are pictures throughout this newsletter for you to enjoy.

talking and sharing over meals and visits. At the moment I am seeing less of her because she is in the midst of preparing for a September wedding. Also, there was an issue over which I refused to compromise and it built a slight wall. However, that provided an opportunity for me to share the biblical basis for my position with Kristen and her fiancé, during which time I was able to share the gospel plainly, an opportunity that only came about with her fiancé because of the unpleasant conflict over that issue. What a reminder that God uses all things for good. Kristen and I plan to get together next week. Please pray for that time together.

For a couple of months now, a women's Bible study has been going on at Deni and Dori's apartment in Adria. Two women were involved at the start and though one is not able to frequent the study at the moment, the other, Angela (56), continues to come willingly and hungrily. Marco had asked me to lead the evangelistic study when it was still only an idea and the Lord has been stretching me in leadership and humility (for I certainly don't have all the answers to the many questions that the women ask!) Continue to pray for Angela, who is reading her Bible faithfully and desirous to know how to become a



A break with Sara, Martina and Rose

child of God. Pray too as there are other women who have been invited and are considering coming.

You might remember that Angela was a contact from the old English Course where we had more than 30 non-believing students. The "new" English Course is *much* reduced in size but the Lord has provided wide open doors with each of the students to talk about their need for Christ. Several are listening. So, continue to pray for Andrea, Stefania, Marta, Simone, Baira, and GianLuca (a new student who has suffered a lot in his life and is searching).

## A Driving Exam

As you've just finished reading in the preceding paragraphs, God has provided many excellent needs for which to shuttle myself back and forth in my little red car. Last September, when the Lord provided me with a car, I really didn't have much use for it besides going back and forth from home (Daniele and Petra's) to work (Marco and Sherrie's). *Now*, I use my car *heavily*, not only for Bible studies and visits and our Saturday youth meetings, but also in playing the part of taxi driver for several people who come to Sunday morning worship. Please pray for my actual driving exam on September 1<sup>st</sup>, the final step in getting my Italian driving license. The tests here are extremely difficult by American standards. I passed the theory exam back in July. Thank you for your prayers and praise be to God!

## Touching Lives Indirectly

So, life is full of people and that means that the practical aspects of the ministry cry out to not be neglected! Our websites continue to be frequented by many people. AiutoBiblico had over 80,000 visits in this past year alone! It's important to remember that 80,000 is not just a number but is rather representative of people who are hungering after Truth and are coming to the site to find Him.

One of those 80,000 is Giuseppe whose baptism we will be celebrating at the beginning of next month. To ponder the Lord's mighty work in his life is simply amazing. Christ once again raised the dead to life.

Another of those 80,000 is Marco L., whose ex-wife recently committed suicide. We mourn with him in the fact that she didn't know Christ but we pray that this pain will be mightily used in Marco's life. This tragedy



Opening Day of Summer Camp 2010

means that his 14 year old son, who had been living with the mother, now lives with Marco. Pray as Marco adjusts to being a full time father in difficult circumstances.

Several of those 80,000 are believers like Carmelo and Maria Grazia and many others who are isolated without a church home, and who look to our church for fellowship, teaching and encouragement.

And the list continues.

## Pray with us for...

Pray with us as we seek to do, and not neglect, the practical jobs, which are tools God uses to build his kingdom.

And pray with us as a church body that we will battle rightly in the midst of the many commitments and daily activities. Not in the flesh, not for things that don't matter eternally, but rather choosing the excellent and giving ourselves not to self but to Christ. Pray with us that we may have a much deeper fervor and love for Christ.

Pray in particular for Daniele and Petra who have been in the midst of trials for a while. There have been struggles with Manuel, and then there's Daniele's ever present tumor, and about 1 month ago they found out that they were pregnant. We all rejoiced with them!

However, they lost the baby last week. There have been pain and tears. Petra continues to have physical pain after the surgery but more importantly, I asked her specifically what medicine they were taking for the spiritual pain. She said they were meditating on Proverbs and seeing their need to raise up well the little gift that they already have (Manuel). Praise God for this perspective and for the fact that God is a miracle worker . . . *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness* ... (Psalm 30:11)

Yes, God is mightily at work here. Praise Him, along with me, for the growth in believers and for the people



What a blessing to bond with my girls, we loved the time together!

whom He has brought into our lives and also for a very rich summer youth camp this year ;-)

## Coming to the USA

Finally, I want to close by letting you all know that it's about that time again! Lord willing, I will be in the States *from the second week in January until the beginning of April*. It will be wonderful to see many of you again and rejoice in God's work together. I will be traveling some of the time with Marco and Sherrie but also want to be open to meeting new people, possibly doing some "house meetings", and visiting new churches in order to share about what God's doing here and garner others who would desire to come alongside and partner with us in this ministry. Let me know if you, or your church, or anyone you know, might be interested in hearing of the work here in Italy.

Let us continue to rejoice in Christ, for we have hope in Him, *the living God, the Savior of all men, especially of believers*.

YOU are true gifts to me! I thank my God for you.

By grace,

Ashley

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