

# Grace Soaked Soul

Learning How to Respond -- March 2012

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Dear fellow pilgrims,

Note: if you are limited on time, but are desirous to know the “brief” on what is happening here in Italy, feel free to jump to the close of this update and read the praise and prayer points. Thank you for taking time to pray!

Thank you for standing with me in prayer over these past two months. They have been full and that is exactly why I *need* to take time to summarize these months in praise and prayer for all of you so that you can continue battling with me in prayer and so that you too can give abundant thanks to our Father for who He is.

I have been learning, once again, the invaluable lesson of saying “no” in these past few months. Of course, I humanly can’t do everything. Why are there moments when I believe that I can? My main struggle in these moments is with humility, for true humility is needed in order to say “no”. How foolish I am sometimes to think that I’m super-woman. True humility means realizing that I am *not* indispensable and that I can’t do everything (i.e. I am not super woman!). There are many good ministries, but God doesn’t give me time to do all of the good things, so, I pray for wisdom to recognize the excellent. Furthermore, God wants me to give Him full control of my life and my schedule and my ministries. Isn’t it all His anyway? In the end, it is pride which makes it hard to let go of the “supposed” control I have in my life.

I thank God that He has been mightily humbling me once again, by sending waves of people and commitments and “priorities”, in order to realize that HE is sovereign and that HE is all-powerful and that He directs my circumstances in order to show me His sovereignty and power and that HE loves me deeply.

Oh, and to dwell more on the deep love of Christ! I am deeply loved of God! Recently, I had a very real reminder of His deep love for me. I celebrated my 31<sup>st</sup> birthday in February and my Italian family celebrated my life with surprise parties and special meals and

favorite cakes and hand-made gifts and my family and friends in the States celebrated my life with phone calls and emails and messages, etc. I was overwhelmed. I was overwhelmed by their thoughts and the time they took to show me their love in a very tangible way. God showed me His kind and undeserved love through their special attentions. How vast the Father’s love for us!

Another way in which God demonstrates His love for me is through Daniele and Petra, and I must say that I have been touched by the many people who have mentioned that they are praying for Daniele and Petra and that they want to be kept informed on how they are doing. Thank you.

Daniele is still waiting to hear about his chemo and we find it strange that after several months the hospital has



Leonardo (12) and Martina (19)  
I spend weekly time with Martina  
encouraging one another in the Lord.

not contacted him yet. However, we see the hand of God in this because when Daniele is not on chemo he is better physically, mentally and spiritually. This is a blessing to all of us. I ask that you continue to pray specifically for wisdom and peace for Daniele and Petra as they consider whether or not further chemo really is the best choice for Daniele at this time. At the moment they are evaluating and praying over whether or not it might be best for Daniele to enjoy a better quality of life without chemo. This is a difficult decision and they are seeking God's will.

I do want to mention briefly that our church is continuing to grow in evangelization. Some of you have asked about this aspect of our ministry as well. Thank you. Now, although I am not going out regularly every Sunday to street evangelize as I had been doing for a couple of years, due to other opportunities of evangelization and discipleship, I am greatly encouraged that we, as a church body, have been going out to the piazza (plaza/square) once a month and that we are learning to pray with perseverance. Whether God brings an abundant harvest from these outings or not, the consistent collaboration in evangelization is producing fruit in us as a church body. This brings me much joy because I see that our calling to share the gospel with others is not just something that is for the few but that we are praying more fervently and sharing our calling more readily as a body. Praise be to God for this growth!

Finally, I will close by sharing a truth that I recently saw in my daily reading. It really struck me in light of the recent lessons that He has been teaching me regarding His heart and desires and humility and time management and learning how to say "no". In 1 Kings 6, Solomon is in the midst of constructing the temple, as God had

commanded him to do. In the beginning part of this chapter I was struck by two things: the manner of construction and the desire of God. First, the manner in which the temple was constructed. In verse 7 it says

*When the house was built, it was with stone prepared at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the house while it was being built.*

There was no noise or confusion during the construction of the temple. I had *never* noticed this before. Reading this became a stunning reminder of how God's ways are powerful but are not ostentatious. It also reminded me, as a Christ-follower, that most kingdom work is done quietly, orderly and with perseverance and faithfulness.

Furthermore, the other truth that struck me is in God's reminder to Solomon in verses 12-14

*"Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel." So Solomon built the house and finished it.*

This reminder served to remind me of God's desire for me as a Christ-follower. It is good that Solomon was building the temple, but what is so much greater than the temple was the heart with which it was built. The building of the temple (house) was an opportunity to demonstrate faithful and steady obedience. God's primary desire is for *us*, our hearts and our will, not our deeds and performance. He then says that when we walk according to His commands and put His decrees into practice, that He will dwell among us and will



Twins Laura and Lidia share my birthday



Adriano sharing with the twin's father at the birthday party the Vigo family organized for me



Enjoying fellowship after our monthly church meal

## Pray:

- Wisdom for Daniele and Petra as they decide whether or not chemo is the route that they wish to continue to take.
- Wisdom for me in choosing that which is excellent and that I will *rest* in those decisions and above all in Christ.
- To persevere as a church body in prayer and evangelization and that the Lord will be pleased to bring more sinners to the saving knowledge of Himself here in Italy.
- That we may all know more of the love of God for us in Christ Jesus (Eph 3:14-21)

never leave us. These have been timely reminders in the midst of a busy “building season”. With what heart do I daily “build”? How do I build? Do I usually focus more on what *I am doing* or what *God is doing in me*?

May we all grow more in focusing on what God is doing in us and focusing on His heart and His overwhelmingly wonderful love. May we dwell on this and not the “overwhelming” tasks at hand. Praise be to God that He has employed us in the building of His kingdom but that, because of His great love, He is first concerned with the shaping of our hearts and of our character.

Thank you once again for your prayers in these past months. Walking with you and learning with you in this life is a joy!

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Ephesians 3:14-21

## Praise:

- We are deeply loved of God!
- God humbles us and shows us more of our sin and Christ forgives!
- Our Father wants our hearts and not our performance.
- For Daniele and Petra’s constant example of patient trust. That Daniele is doing well without chemo.
- Growing in evangelism as a church body and not just individuals.

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