

## **WoH 577 God's Grace** (Lora's story of her husband's death and God's grace)

### **Intro theme**

**Tammy:** Hello my friend and welcome to Women of Hope. Hi Carol!

**Carol:** Hi Tammy! It is so good to be together again. We have a friend with us today who has come to tell us about a very difficult time in her life and how God helped her. Welcome to Women of Hope Lora.

**Lora:** Thank you. It's hard to know where to begin when I'm talking about the path God has led me on. I'll start at the beginning of my relationship with a boy named Mike.

**Carol:** This is a young man you met at university is that right?

**Lora:** Yes we met in our first year. He was a tall 18-year-old with short, blonde hair always parted perfectly on the side. His blue eyes lit up and crinkled at the sides when he laughed, which he did often. He had a great sense of humor.

**Carol:** I can tell you really liked him!

**Lora:** Oh yes, but we didn't start dating until the next year. We were engaged the following year, and married the month we graduated.

Mike became a qualified counselor and we moved here to North Carolina for him to work as a youth pastor at a church.

**Carol:** Did you both enjoy the work?

**Lora:** We loved working together, planning new activities for the teens and dreaming of our future... especially the family we hoped to have one day. While most guys dreamed of having a son, Mike wanted a daughter. I will never forget the day we found out we were having a little girl. All we could do was look at each other, smile broadly, and laugh.

When Olivia Grace finally arrived, she was a beautiful baby. Every cry she made, Mike would jump up to change her diapers, wrap her up, and hold her close. Grace was daddy's girl from day one.

**Carol:** It's not easy with a new baby is it?

**Lora:** No, we got very little sleep the first few weeks. I was exhausted and still recovering from the delivery and Mike was tired all the time.

**Carol:** And if you are like others, you thought it was just normal stress.

**Lora:** Oh yes. I didn't realize how different Mike was acting...and he began to have headaches.

When Grace was five weeks old, Mike went to the doctor and they sent him for a CT scan, to look at his brain. Mike called me at home and I met him to pick up his prescription, never suspecting what the next few minutes would bring. After his scan, Mike was sent back to the doctor's office. A few minutes later, he called me with news that would change everything. Mike had a brain tumor.

I walked into the doctor's office feeling dazed. A nurse looked at me with shocked, sad eyes. She took Grace from me as Mike walked toward me with a reassuring, small smile. He took me in his arms, as tears streamed down my face and I heaved for every breath. He whispered in my ear, "Even if I'm not alright, I'm alright."

From a young age, I believed that while God loved me, He did not approve of me, because he is Holy. Why would He? I constantly messed up. I failed Him daily. I thought he would punish me if I were to mess up badly enough. Because I had such a horribly wrong, shallow view of God, I believed lies about Him. I felt like Mike's sickness was somehow my fault. That maybe God was punishing me for not reading my Bible enough or praying enough. During Mike's horrendous sickness, and in the years to follow, I came to realize I had had a totally wrong view of God.

**Carol:** On Women of Hope today, our special friend Lora is sharing her story of grief and pain.

**Lora:** For the next ten months, the level of suffering Mike went through is hard to describe. The doctors had never seen anyone with this kind of tumor suffer such bad complications. 10 out of 10 pain. A traumatic brain injury meant he couldn't open his eyes, speak, or move anything but his fingers for weeks. Permanent brain damage. Toxic treatments. Never-ending therapy and doctor's visits. He went into a coma. Finally, the cancer grew uncontrollably and Mike died. God took him home.

The day after my 26<sup>th</sup> birthday, I became a widowed single mom...and I was shattered. I had somehow held onto the hope that God would heal him, even after all he had suffered. I just knew a miracle was going to come at any moment. Everyone else could see what was going to happen, but I couldn't! The doctors had taken Mike's parents and me into a dark room to show us the results of his brain scan. I stared blankly at the computer screen as the doctor circled the image of the massive

tumor in my husband's head...the tumor had exploded in its growth. Mike was never going to wake up.

**Carol:** Oh Lora, this must have been terrible for you.

**Lora:** Grief is a hard thing to describe to someone who has never experienced it. The inner turmoil was deafening. I went through his memorial services and burial feeling numb. My new reality was my worst fear. I couldn't get away from it. For the first two months, I was not just broken; I was shattered beyond repair. I felt as if I could barely breathe on my own. I had nothing left to offer anyone here...how would I raise our baby without Mike? The only solution I could see was that I had to go, too. I could not take one more step.

**Carol:** But you did survive.

**Lora:** Yes...by the miracle of *God's grace* alone. I made it through those first couple months of complete despair and realized that my daughter needed me. I had to live for her. I look back now and see that Mike and I could not have chosen a better name for her than Grace.

I had no idea where to begin this journey into grief. I dreaded the nights with the cold sheets and undented pillow next to me. I dreaded the mornings when I would wake up and feel the reality of his death wash over me again and again; I was exhausted, struggling, and confused about who God is and what He was doing.

I had to get help, so I started going to a local pastor for counseling. I talked to him about my struggle with guilt. I was a pastor's wife but I was trying to understand what God was really like. I was crushed by what others expected of me. I shouldn't be angry...but I was. I should trust God...but I couldn't. If God didn't have reason to be angry with me before, I thought, surely He did now.

I could not find peace. My life felt completely out of control, even out of God's control. I rebelled against life as a single mom. Parenting became one terrifying and overwhelming event after another. Every sickness Grace had, every bump on her head felt like it could be the next devastating crisis. I had planned for Mike to walk through the parenting experience with me, but now I had to handle it alone.

I continued to try to please everyone else and work hard to be the perfect Christian. Fear ruled every aspect of my life. But I was still not completely at the end of myself. During Mike's illness, he suffered horrible seizures that I would have nightmares about. I hated them. I prayed every day over Grace that she would never have a seizure.

But one day, she did have one. It was one of the worst moments of my life! As I cradled her tiny body in my arms, I felt like I was going to lose her, too. After the first tests, she eventually needed a scan to look for, of all things, a brain tumor.

**Tammy:** I'm taking a deep breath. If you just joined us, You're with Women of Hope. And Lora is telling us her very hard story about the death of her young husband and now finding that her baby daughter Grace may have a brain tumor. Lora? how did you find hope at this time of shock and despair?

**Lora:** I was, finally, at the end of myself. I could hold nothing back from God anymore. This was probably the most important moment of my life. Finally I was really listening to God, and I could hear Him above the turmoil inside my heart. He said, "Trust Me. I love you. I plan good for you and not evil. You are my child. When my Son Jesus Christ died on the cross in your place, he gave you the way to go to heaven, but he gave you more than that. Now you are my child, there is *hope* and *meaning* for every moment you suffer, for every tear you shed when you're alone. There is *grace*; I will make you strong to bear the pain that no one else can see. You can *rest* even when there is reason to fear. You can be *peaceful* even when there is nothing calm in your life. *I am more than enough for you.*"

In His mercy, God allowed Grace to be healed from her condition. And by that time, I knew I would never be the same. God had taken away the wrong ideas I had of Him. He showed me the amazing truth that He is totally in control of every detail of my life. I didn't need to try to hold everything together on my own anymore. I began to realize how deep His love is for me.

I could find *rest* knowing that God controlled every detail of my life, even the most painful...because I saw His care, mercy, and faithfulness to bring me through the most painful circumstances I could imagine. The *hope* I found was in the good news that He loved me...so deeply that He made a plan to sacrifice His own Son for broken, sinful people like me. God's word says: 'God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.' (John 3:16 CEVD)

**Carol:** Friend, whatever you are going through we trust that like Lora, you too, can find hope and peace in your life knowing that God loves you so much that he gave his only son for you. You can trust him completely. It's time for us to go now, but we would love to hear your story.

**Tammy:** You can write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope. The email address is [TWRWomenofHope@TWR.org](mailto:TWRWomenofHope@TWR.org). That's [TWRWomenofHope@TWR.org](mailto:TWRWomenofHope@TWR.org) Or, if you missed a program or want to hear one again visit our website [TWRWomenofHope.org](http://TWRWomenofHope.org) or visit our Facebook page.

**Carol:** We do hope you will be with us again. Remember, God is bigger than any of your trouble and you can trust Him completely! Goodbye and God bless you.

**Theme out**

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