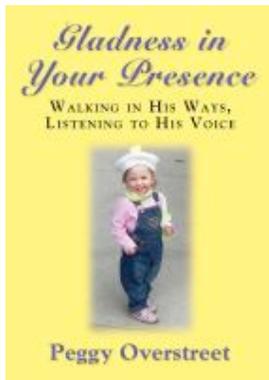


Gladness in Your Presence

WALKING IN HIS WAYS,
LISTENING TO HIS VOICE



Peggy Overstreet



This book is full of stories about the "snack bowl" of ordinary life experiences, every-day mundane topics that morph into joyful spiritual lessons. Scripture is full of God's children who praise Him, grateful for His salvation, discipline, strength, joy, and answered prayer in daily life, and especially in the midst of trials. To experience gladness in His presence is a gift that comes directly from God Himself.

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GLADNESS

IN

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*Walking in His Ways,
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GREEN-EYED MONSTER

When driving through certain ritzy neighborhoods, I have an unladylike habit of drooling out the car windows at extreme glitz-and-glamour houses, I confess to having a bad habit of smashing the 10th Commandment (Exodus 20:17). Even if the Lord endowed us with enough money to move there, I'm pretty sure that behavior alone would preempt me from being allowed to live in their neighborhoods. Who wants a drooling neighbor with Commandment shards all over their lawns?

But it recently occurred to me that there might be a flip-side to this commandment. How about, "*do not do anything deliberately that you KNOW will cause your neighbor to covet your things.*" I've come to the appalling realization that sometimes I want to own something because, deep-deep down, I think it would make me look better than I am to others. My new thingamabob could make me look richer, or "fashionista." I've considered that if I buy something that is beyond my means, but it's so ultra-cool that it will make my friends and/or enemies "green with jealousy" that I could be pulling them right into a big pit of covetousness. Do I really want that to happen to my neighbor? If so, then loving my neighbor isn't high on my list, is it?

Peggy Overstreet

Thank You, Lord, for a swift kick to my ego. If I trust in You and delight myself in You, You will change my desires to be Your desires (Psalm 37:4). I now consider myself thoroughly and lovingly disciplined.

FATNESS AND FASHION

“Does this make me look fat?” What wife hasn’t earnestly asked her husband that question while trying on a new outfit? Of course, that’s considered a loaded question, and some husbands are prone to fidget, lie, or run away. My brother once was asked by his wife if he liked a dress she was trying on in a store. He asked how much it cost, she told him the exorbitant price, and he said, *“I think it makes you look fat.”* He both solved and created problems for himself in one brilliant maneuver.

Even the most physically perfect specimen of Hollywood humanity can look atrocious if wearing the wrong outfit. But most of us “normal” people have to contend with the sand-shifting effects that time has on our bodies, and the result is that the things that *used* to look good can now cause us to look peculiar, to say the least. And no amount of self-confidence can make that mini-skirt, or skinny jeans, look good. Watch any t.v. show nowadays, and they will offer segments on how to dress in a fashion that emphasizes some things and draws the eyes away from others. Wear this belt, don’t wear those shoes. Do this with your earrings, and for Pete’s sake, don’t EVER do that with your hair!!

“Do this, don’t do that.” Where have I seen this concept before? Oh yes! *“Put on, put off ...”* Father, You’ve told me to **put aside** bad behavior, such as

anger, abusive speech, etc. (Colossians 3:8). You want me to treat those qualities like an ugly garment. Instead, You want me to **put on** attractive behavior, such as love, compassion, gentleness, etc., like I would a beautiful garment (Colossians 3:12-14). Father, on a daily basis, lead me to ask you, “*does this attitude I just put on make me look fat-headed?*”

How happy I am that You never fidget around with the truth. You will be brutally, yet lovingly, honest in telling me to put on the new self, and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Your eye for spiritual “fashion” is always accurate.

PAY ATTENTION

When my brother and I were kids, our mean parents didn't allow us to have any fun. We were repeatedly warned *not* to run with scissors, *not* to play in the street, *not* to bring dandelions into the house, *not* to put each other's toys in the oven, etc. Of course, most of these warnings were issued strictly to my brother – I never ever did anything wrong. Unless, of course, you count the times I held my brother's nostrils closed when he napped to see how long it would take him to wake up. I felt it was an interesting scientific experiment, but my mother was not amused.

Mom was especially creative in teaching us to heed her warnings. In the 50's, before seatbelts and airbags, the only way *not* to be creamed in the car in case of an accident, was to lean over and cover your head. So mom would practice one particular command, hoping we would respond accordingly -- much like Pavlov did with dogs, only with no treats. She'd pretend that we were about to have an accident and then yell, "*Duck!*" And did we respond the way she hoped? Oh no. We had no sense of imminent danger, so with our charming childlike sense of fun, we would instead yell "*Quaaaack-quack-quack!*" and laugh like buffoons. Poor mom. She was trying to say, "*pay attention to this, it's important.*" We'd pretend to listen, secretly knowing that our own way of doing things was much more

entertaining. After all, what did she know, she's only mom.

Have you ever noticed in the Old Testament how God repeatedly warned Israel to beware that they "*not forget God by not keeping His commandments*" and that their "*hearts not be deceived that you worship other gods.*" (Deuteronomy 8:11; 11:16). Jesus frequently told His disciples to "*beware; watch out; be on guard; see to it*", etc. He was telling them, "*pay attention, this is important.*" He wanted them to be on the lookout against false prophets (Matthew 7:15), greed (Luke 12:15), and the worries of life (Luke 21:34).

Father, thank You for causing me to want to do what You ask. But I do need to check myself occasionally, and ask if I listen to You any better than I did to mom. Do I give You proper respect as my Lord and Savior? It's not a matter of, do I believe in You, but do I believe You, do what you say (Matthew 7:24)? Or am I instead 'quacking' at You?

OVERKILL

The last time I had a dental procedure, my oh-so kindly, generous, thoughtful husband procured mushy edible food for me. If you consider gelatin, pudding, and sports drinks to be food. The problem was that the thoughtful husband *thought* I should have a month's supply. And since I only needed them for a couple of days, well ... we now have fossilized food in the cabinet. When I tried to tell him gently that this was overkill, he seemed surprised at my response to his love offering.

As I write, it's almost Christmas, and for some reason, this overkill issue caused me to think about the many ways Scripture tells us how God has over-the-top showered His children with loving gifts. He has shown himself to be our Provider, as with Abraham about to sacrifice his son, knowing that "*God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering*" (Genesis 22:8-14). For Abraham, that was not an overkill gift. It saved his son, and glorified God.

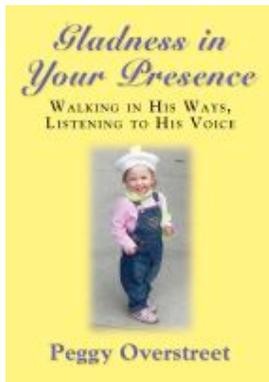
King Solomon humbly asked God for "*an understanding heart to judge Your people,*" God responded by saying, "*I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor*" (1 Kings 3:9-13). Not overkill, but abundance of love, and glorifying to God.

The apostle Paul made sure the Philippian believers understood that "*God will supply all your needs*

according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be the glory forever" (Philippians 4:19). Overkill? No. Love? Yes, out of His endless, abundant supply, and for His glory.

Today, I'm meditating on God's glorious gift to us. "*There has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord*" (Luke 2:11). "*And the angels said,*" ... "*Hey, don't you think this is overkill?...*" NO, they did not. They were "*praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest,'*" (Luke 2:13-14).

Father, Your gifts may seem so overabundant that I can't totally wrap my mind around them, or understand why You would be so incredibly generous to me, except that You loved me long before I ever loved You (1 John 4:10). And even more unbelievable, Your gifts don't stop with this life. One day I will be face to face with the Lord Jesus who saved me, and I know that I have "*an inheritance reserved in heaven,*" (1 Peter 1:4). Your gifts are never overkill, nor will they sit on a shelf becoming increasingly useless. With every gift You bequeath on me, "*I will praise the Lord while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being*" (Psalm 146:2).



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