

Time Audit Chronicles: Greetings and the Centrality of Christ

(1 Corinthians 1:1-9)

Prologue: Paul's Letter of Encouragement

The Presswood family gathered in their cozy living room, reading 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, where Paul begins his letter by reminding the Corinthians of their calling in Christ and God's faithfulness. Ariel had been thinking about how important letters were in Paul's time and how they connected early Christians across cities. Alice, seated with Mr. Fluffernutter, imagined Paul dictating the letter with a deep sense of care for the people in Corinth.

"Daddy," Ariel asked, "Why does Paul start his letters this way? Why not just dive into the problems the church was facing?"

Ryan smiled, appreciating the depth of Ariel's question. "Paul knew the Corinthians were struggling with divisions and other issues, but he wanted to remind them of something important first: their identity in Christ. He starts with encouragement, focusing on what unites them—their calling, their sanctification, and their fellowship with Jesus. By grounding his letter in these truths, Paul ensures the Corinthians remember that their strength and unity come from God's faithfulness, not their own efforts."

Ariel nodded. "So, he's reminding them who they are in Christ before he talks about the things they need to fix?"

"Exactly," Ryan said. "Let's use the Time Audit Machine to explore Paul's opening words and experience how he emphasized the centrality of Christ to their faith."

The Journey Begins: Paul's Opening Greeting (1 Corinthians 1:1-3)

The Time Audit Machine powered up, and with a flash, the family found themselves in a small, humble room in Ephesus, where Paul was dictating his letter to a scribe. The letter was addressed to the church in Corinth, a bustling city known for its diversity, wealth, and moral challenges. As Paul spoke, his words were filled with warmth and purpose.

"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." (1 Corinthians 1:1-2).

Ryan pointed to Paul as he spoke. "Notice how Paul begins by affirming his calling as an apostle, not by his own merit but through the will of God. He's reminding the Corinthians that he speaks with authority, not from himself, but from God's appointment."

Ariel watched as Paul emphasized the sanctification of the believers in Corinth. "So, when Paul says they are 'sanctified in Christ Jesus' and 'called to be saints,' he's saying that their identity isn't based on their city or their past—it's based on what Jesus has done for them?"

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Sanctification means being set apart for God’s purposes. Paul is reminding them that they are holy because of Jesus, not because of anything they’ve done. He’s also connecting them to all believers everywhere, showing that they’re part of a bigger family—the universal body of Christ.”

Paul’s greeting continued: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:3).

Ariel smiled. “Paul always seems to start with ‘grace and peace.’ It’s like he wants to remind them that everything they have comes from God’s grace and that peace with God comes through Jesus.”

“That’s right,” Ryan said. “Grace is the foundation of the gospel, and peace is its result. Paul’s greeting isn’t just polite—it’s a theological reminder of what it means to be a follower of Christ.”

Thanksgiving for God’s Faithfulness (1 Corinthians 1:4-9)

Paul’s tone shifted to one of gratitude as he said, “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.” (1 Corinthians 1:4-6).

Ryan gestured toward the scene. “Paul is thanking God for the grace that has been poured out on the Corinthians. Despite their struggles, he acknowledges that they have been enriched by Christ in their speech and knowledge. This shows that God is at work in them, equipping them for His purposes.”

Ariel thought for a moment. “So, even though the Corinthians had a lot of issues, Paul still saw the good things that God was doing in their lives?”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “Paul wanted them to know that their failures didn’t define them—God’s grace did. He was reminding them that the testimony of Christ—the truth of the gospel—had taken root in their lives, and that they were being equipped for God’s mission.”

Paul continued, “So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:7-8).

Ariel’s eyes lit up. “Paul is saying that God will keep them strong until Jesus comes back, right? Even though they’re not perfect, God will make sure they’re blameless in the end?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Paul is pointing to God’s faithfulness, not their own efforts, as the reason they can have confidence in their salvation. God is the one who will sustain them and present them blameless on the day of Christ’s return.”

Finally, Paul concluded this section with a powerful declaration: “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:9).

Ariel nodded thoughtfully. “So, it’s all about God’s faithfulness. He’s the one who called them, and He’s the one who will sustain them. Their identity and their hope are all because of Him.”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “Paul is emphasizing that their relationship with Jesus is based on God’s faithfulness, not their own performance. This is a reminder that we’re called to fellowship with Jesus, to live in a close, personal relationship with Him, trusting in His grace and power.”

Ariel's Reflection on Corinthian Identity

That night, as Ariel lay in bed, she couldn't stop thinking about how Paul's words must have affected the Corinthians. She imagined them hearing the letter read aloud, surrounded by the distractions and pressures of Corinth. She wondered how they must have felt to be reminded of their true identity in Christ.

"Daddy," Ariel called out as Ryan passed by her room. He stepped inside, sitting down on the edge of her bed. "Do you think the Corinthians really understood what Paul was saying about their identity in Christ? I mean, they were living in a city with so many expectations—how did they feel when Paul reminded them that they were set apart for God?"

Ryan smiled gently. "That's a great question, Ariel. Corinth was a city full of distractions—wealth, power, and a lot of conflicting ideas about what success looked like. Paul's affirmation of their identity in Christ was probably a powerful reminder that they weren't defined by the expectations of society. Instead, they were defined by God's love and His calling."

Ariel thought for a moment. "It must have been hard for them, though. I mean, sometimes I feel like I have to be a certain way to fit in at school. But Paul was telling them that what mattered most was how God saw them, not what other people thought."

Ryan nodded. "Exactly. Paul wanted them to see themselves through God's eyes—loved, chosen, and set apart. It's easy to get caught up in what the world expects of us, but God's perspective is different. He sees us through the lens of His grace and purpose for our lives."

Ariel's eyes lit up with understanding. "So, when Paul said they were sanctified and called to be saints, he was reminding them that they didn't have to live up to the world's standards. They just had to live out who they already were in Jesus."

"Right," Ryan said. "And that's true for us too. Our worth doesn't come from what we achieve or how others see us—it comes from God's love and the fact that we belong to Him. That's why Paul always starts his letters by reminding people of their identity in Christ. It's the foundation of everything else."

Ariel smiled, feeling a sense of peace. "I think I want to start seeing myself that way too—like how God sees me, not just what other people expect. Maybe that will help me when I feel like I don't fit in."

Ryan leaned over and kissed her forehead. "I think that's a wonderful idea, Ariel. Remember, you are loved, chosen, and set apart by God. Just like the Corinthians, your identity is grounded in His faithfulness, not in anything else."

Ariel closed her eyes, her heart full. "Thanks, Daddy. Grace and peace, right?"

Ryan chuckled softly. "Grace and peace, my love. Sleep well."

Ariel and Ryan: Exploring Sanctification

The next morning, as Ariel and Ryan sat together at the kitchen table, Ariel looked up, her brow furrowed with thought. "Daddy, I've been thinking more about what it means to be 'sanctified in Christ.' How can I really understand that my identity isn't about what I do, but about what God says about me?"

Ryan took a sip of his coffee and nodded. “That’s a big question, Ariel, and it’s something that even adults struggle with sometimes. Being sanctified means being set apart for God’s purposes. It means that God has already decided that you’re special to Him—not because of anything you’ve done, but because of what Jesus has done for you.”

Ariel sighed. “I get that, but it’s still hard. I mean, at school, everyone talks about grades and awards and how good you are at things. It feels like if I don’t do well, I’m not good enough.”

Ryan reached across the table and took her hand. “I understand, Ariel. The world has its own way of measuring people, but God’s way is different. Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that their value came from being loved by God, not from what they achieved in Corinth. It’s the same for you. Your worth isn’t tied to your grades or how many awards you win. It’s tied to the fact that God has called you His own.”

Ariel looked down at her hand in her dad’s. “So, it’s like God is saying, ‘You’re already enough because you belong to Me’?”

Ryan smiled. “Exactly. And that’s what Paul meant when he said the Corinthians were sanctified and called to be saints. It’s not about living up to the world’s standards—it’s about living out who God has already made you to be.”

Ariel nodded slowly. “I think it will take some time for me to really believe that. But I want to try. I want to see myself the way God sees me, not just the way the world does.”

Ryan squeezed her hand gently. “And that’s all God asks of us, Ariel. To trust Him, to see ourselves through His eyes, and to live in the confidence that we are loved and set apart. You’re already on the right path, just by wanting to see yourself that way.”

Ariel smiled, a sense of peace washing over her. “Thanks, Daddy. I’m going to try to remember that today—grace and peace, right?”

Ryan nodded. “Grace and peace, my love. Always remember that you are loved beyond measure, not because of what you do, but because of who you are in Christ.”

Ariel Reflects on God’s Gifts

Later that day, Ariel sat by the window, looking out at the yard. She thought about the gifts God had given her—her love for reading, her curiosity about the world, her ability to care for others. But sometimes, it felt like those gifts weren’t enough, especially when she compared herself to others.

“Daddy?” Ariel called out as Ryan walked by. He stepped into the room and sat down beside her. “What is it, sweetheart?”

Ariel sighed. “I’ve been thinking about the gifts God has given me. Sometimes I struggle to see them clearly. I know I’m supposed to be grateful, but I just feel like they’re not as important as what other people have.”

Ryan put his arm around her. “Ariel, I understand how you feel. It’s easy to look at what others have and feel like we’re not enough. But remember what Paul said to the Corinthians. They had their flaws, they had their struggles, but God enriched them with His grace. They were blessed with gifts—gifts of

knowledge, of speech, of understanding. And those gifts were valuable, even if they couldn't see it all the time."

Ariel looked at her dad, her eyes searching. "So, even though they weren't perfect, God still used them?"

Ryan nodded. "Exactly. God gave them gifts because He had a purpose for them, just like He has a purpose for you. Your love for learning, your kindness, your curiosity—those are all gifts from God, and they are important. They may not look like someone else's gifts, but that's because God made you unique. He has a plan for you that only you can fulfill."

Ariel smiled, a hint of understanding dawning. "So, it's not about comparing myself to others. It's about trusting that God knows what He's doing, right?"

"Right," Ryan said, smiling back. "God's work in you is just as important as His work in anyone else. He's given you everything you need to do what He's called you to do. Just like the Corinthians, you are enriched by His grace, even if you don't always see it."

Ariel leaned against her dad, feeling a sense of comfort. "Thanks, Daddy. I think I'm starting to understand. God's gifts are enough because He's enough."

Ryan kissed the top of her head. "That's exactly it, Ariel. And as you grow, you'll see more and more how God's grace is working in you, shaping you, and using your gifts for His glory."

Ariel closed her eyes, feeling a deep sense of peace. "Grace and peace, right?"

Ryan chuckled softly. "Grace and peace, my love. Always."

Ariel and Ryan Discuss Relying on God's Faithfulness

The next evening, Ariel and Ryan sat together on the porch, the sun setting in the distance. Ariel turned to her dad, her eyes thoughtful. "Daddy, I've been thinking more about what you said the other day—about God's faithfulness. How do I rely on that instead of just trying to do everything on my own?"

Ryan looked at his daughter, sensing the sincerity in her question. "That's a really important thing to think about, Ariel. It's natural to want to rely on ourselves, especially when we're facing challenges. But God calls us to trust in Him because He knows our weaknesses, and He wants to be our strength."

Ariel frowned slightly. "But sometimes, I feel like I should be able to handle things on my own. Like if I try harder, then I won't need to ask for help."

Ryan nodded. "I understand. It can be hard to let go of that mindset. But remember what Paul said to the Corinthians—they were enriched by God's grace, even though they weren't perfect. God didn't expect them to do everything by themselves. He wanted them to lean on Him, to find their strength in His faithfulness, not their own abilities."

Ariel looked down at her hands. "So, when I'm struggling, I need to remind myself that it's okay to ask God for help?"

"Exactly," Ryan said gently. "Relying on God doesn't mean we stop trying or that we give up. It means that we recognize that our strength comes from Him. When we face challenges, we can ask God to help

us, to give us wisdom, and to carry us through. It's about trusting that He is always with us, and that His faithfulness will sustain us."

Ariel nodded slowly. "I think I get it. It's not about being strong enough on my own—it's about letting God be my strength."

Ryan smiled. "Yes. And that's what Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand too. They didn't have to be perfect; they just had to trust in God's faithfulness. And it's the same for you. God loves you, Ariel, and He wants to be the one you turn to when things get tough. He wants to be your source of strength."

Ariel looked up at her dad, her eyes shining with a new understanding. "Thanks, Daddy. I'm going to try to remember that. It's comforting to know that I don't have to do everything by myself."

Ryan hugged her gently. "You're never alone, Ariel. God is always with you, and He's always ready to help. All you have to do is trust Him and lean on His faithfulness. That's where true strength comes from."

Ariel smiled, a sense of peace settling over her. "Grace and peace, right?"

Ryan chuckled softly. "Grace and peace, my love. Always remember that God's faithfulness is your strength."

Alice Imagines Herself in Corinth

Later that afternoon, Alice sat on the living room floor with Mr. Fluffernutter, her stuffed bunny, in her lap. She was lost in her imagination, thinking about everything she had heard about the church in Corinth. She closed her eyes and pictured herself there, as one of the members of the early church.

"Okay, Mr. Fluffernutter," Alice said, her voice taking on a playful tone, "we're going to be part of the Corinthian church. We have to share our gifts, just like Paul said."

She held Mr. Fluffernutter up and continued, "What gifts do we have to offer? Well, I have the gift of making people smile, and you, Mr. Fluffernutter, have the gift of being super cuddly. We can help everyone feel happy and loved."

Ariel, who had just walked into the room, overheard her sister and smiled. "Alice, what are you doing?"

Alice looked up, her eyes shining with excitement. "I'm pretending that I'm in Corinth, Ariel! Paul said that everyone has gifts, right? So, I'm thinking about the gifts that I could give to the church." She hugged Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. "I think my gift is making people feel better. Even if it's just a hug or a smile, I think that's important."

Ariel sat down beside her sister, her heart warmed by Alice's innocence. "You're right, Alice. That is important. Paul said that God gave everyone gifts, and they're all needed to help the church grow. Your gift of making people smile can bring so much joy to others."

Alice nodded enthusiastically. "And Mr. Fluffernutter can help too! He's really good at comforting people. I think everyone in Corinth would love him."

Ryan, who had been listening from the doorway, stepped into the room and knelt beside his daughters. “You know, Alice, Paul told the Corinthians that they were enriched by God in everything. That means even the small things—like giving a hug or sharing a smile—are gifts from God. They help build others up and show them God’s love.”

Alice beamed. “So, my gift matters too?”

Ryan smiled. “Absolutely, sweetheart. Every gift matters. God has given each of us something special to share, and when we use our gifts to help others, we’re doing exactly what He wants us to do.”

Ariel put her arm around Alice. “See, Alice? You and Mr. Fluffernutter have a really important job—showing God’s love to others. That’s what Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand too. Even if their gifts seemed small, they were all part of God’s plan.”

Alice grinned, hugging Mr. Fluffernutter even tighter. “Grace and peace, right?”

Ryan chuckled. “Grace and peace, my love. And don’t forget—your gifts, no matter how small they seem, are part of God’s big plan to show His love to the world.”

Alice in the Bustling Market of Corinth

Later that day, Alice sat by the window, holding Mr. Fluffernutter, her imagination carrying her away to the bustling streets of Corinth. She imagined herself standing in the middle of a noisy market, surrounded by merchants selling spices, fabrics, and all kinds of goods. People were talking loudly, haggling over prices, and children were running through the narrow streets.

“Mr. Fluffernutter,” Alice whispered, “what do you think it would be like to get a letter from Paul?” She hugged her stuffed bunny closer. “I think it would be amazing. Everyone in the church would gather together, and we’d listen as someone read it out loud. Paul’s words would remind us that we’re all part of God’s family, even though we’re different.”

She smiled, picturing the scene. “Just like Daddy says, Paul wanted everyone to feel connected. It didn’t matter if we lived far apart or if we were different from each other—his letters brought us together. I bet everyone felt so encouraged when they heard his words.”

Ariel walked into the room and saw her sister deep in thought. “Alice, what are you thinking about?”

Alice looked up, her eyes bright. “I’m thinking about what it would be like to get a letter from Paul in Corinth. I think it would feel like getting a big hug from far away—like Paul was reminding everyone that we’re all in this together, even if we’re not in the same place.”

Ariel smiled and sat beside her sister. “That’s a beautiful way to think about it, Alice. Paul’s letters were like that—they encouraged people, reminded them of God’s love, and helped them stay connected, even when they were far apart.”

Alice nodded. “It’s like when we send messages to our friends now. It makes them happy, and it helps them remember that we care about them. I think Paul’s letters did the same thing for the people in Corinth.”

Ryan, who had overheard the conversation, joined his daughters by the window. “Alice, you’re absolutely right. Communication—whether through letters back then or messages today—helps us stay connected and encourages us in our faith. Paul’s letters reminded the Corinthians of their unity in Christ, and our words can do the same for the people we care about.”

Alice beamed, feeling a sense of connection to the early church. “Grace and peace, right?”

Ryan smiled. “Grace and peace, my love. Just like Paul’s letters brought grace and peace to the Corinthians, our words can bring grace and peace to the people in our lives too.””

Alice Declares God’s Faithfulness

A little later, as the family gathered in the living room for their evening devotion, Alice suddenly stood up, holding Mr. Fluffernutter in the air. “I won’t ever fall down because God’s holding my hand!” she declared with conviction.

Ryan and Ariel looked at each other, smiling at Alice’s innocent confidence.

“That’s right, Alice,” Ryan said, his voice filled with warmth. “God is always holding our hand. Just like Paul reminded the Corinthians, God is faithful. He will never let us go, even when we face difficult times.”

Ariel looked at her sister, her heart touched by Alice’s childlike faith. “It’s like Paul said—God will keep us strong until the end. We don’t have to be afraid because He’s the one holding onto us.”

Alice nodded enthusiastically. “And Mr. Fluffernutter too!” she said, giving her stuffed bunny a tight hug. “God’s holding all of us.”

Ryan knelt beside Alice, his eyes softening. “You’re absolutely right, Alice. God’s faithfulness means that we’re secure in Him. No matter what happens, we can trust that He’s always with us, guiding us and giving us strength.”

Ariel leaned in, her voice gentle. “Sometimes, I forget that, especially when I’m trying to do everything by myself. But you’re right, Alice. We can trust that God’s always holding our hand.”

Alice beamed, her innocence shining through. “Grace and peace, right?”

Ryan smiled, pulling both of his daughters into a hug. “Grace and peace, my loves. Let’s always remember that God is faithful, and He will never let us go.”

Alice Imagines the Church as a Big Family

The next afternoon, Alice sat in the living room, surrounded by her stuffed animals. Mr. Fluffernutter was, as always, right by her side. She was deep in her imagination, thinking about the church in Corinth and everything she had heard from her family. She decided to create her own version of the church—a big, joyful family where everyone’s gifts came together.

“Okay, everyone,” Alice announced to her stuffed animals, her voice full of excitement. “We’re all part of the big church family! And in this family, everyone has a special gift to share.”

She picked up Mr. Fluffernutter and held him up high. “Mr. Fluffernutter, your gift is being the best hugger! You make everyone feel better with your cuddles. That’s your way of showing love, just like in the real church!”

She looked around at her other stuffed animals—a teddy bear, a stuffed lion, and a little plush giraffe. “Teddy, you have the gift of listening. When someone feels sad, you’re always there to listen. Lion, you’re brave, and you help everyone feel safe. And Giraffe, you’re always reaching for the highest leaves, which means you help us all see things from a higher perspective!”

Ariel walked into the room and watched her sister for a moment, a smile spreading across her face. “Alice, what are you doing?”

Alice looked up, her eyes shining with joy. “I’m pretending that all my stuffed animals are part of the church! We’re all one big family, and everyone has a special gift to share—just like Paul said.”

Ariel sat down beside her sister, her heart warmed by Alice's imagination. "That's such a beautiful way to think about it, Alice. Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that everyone's gifts are important, and they all come together to make the church stronger."

Alice nodded eagerly. “Exactly! Just like how Mr. Fluffernutter gives the best hugs, everyone has something special they can do to help. It doesn’t matter if it’s big or small—what matters is that we all do it together.”

Ryan, who had been listening from the doorway, stepped into the room and knelt beside his daughters. “Alice, that’s such a wonderful way to understand what Paul was teaching. The church really is like a big family, and God has given each of us gifts so we can help each other. When we all use our gifts, we make the whole family stronger.”

Alice beamed, hugging Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “So, even if it’s just giving hugs or listening, it’s still important?”

Ryan smiled. “Absolutely, sweetheart. Every gift matters. God gave each of us something special to share, and when we use those gifts, we’re showing His love to others. Just like in your stuffed animal family, everyone’s gifts are needed.”

Ariel put her arm around Alice. “You’re teaching us so much, Alice. Sometimes we forget that even the smallest things can make a big difference. Your imagination helps us see what true unity looks like—everyone working together, sharing their gifts, and loving each other.”

Alice grinned, her face lighting up with happiness. “Grace and peace, right?”

Ryan chuckled. “Grace and peace, my love. And don’t forget—when we use our gifts to help others, we’re being just like the church in Corinth, a big family centered around Jesus.”””””

Ariel and Alice Reflect on Sanctification

Later that afternoon, Ariel and Alice sat together on the back porch. Ariel looked out over the yard, deep in thought. “You know, Alice, being sanctified means we’re set apart for God’s purposes. It’s not about being perfect—it’s about being loved by God and chosen by Him.”

Alice, hugging Mr. Fluffernutter close, tilted her head curiously. “But how do we know we’re set apart, Ariel? I mean, we still make mistakes, right?”

Ariel smiled at her sister’s innocent question. “Yeah, we do. But it’s not about being perfect, Alice. It’s about God seeing us as special because of Jesus. Even when we make mistakes, God still loves us and calls us His own.”

Alice thought for a moment, then asked, “Did you ever feel like you weren’t good enough, Ariel?”

Ariel nodded. “Yeah, I’ve felt that way a lot. Like at school, when everyone talks about their grades and all the things they’re good at. Sometimes, I feel like I’m not good enough compared to everyone else. But what I’m learning is that God doesn’t see me that way. He sees me through Jesus, and that means I’m already enough.”

Alice’s eyes widened. “So, it’s like God looks at us with special glasses—glasses that see only the good parts?”

Ariel laughed softly. “Yeah, I guess you could say that. God sees us through Jesus, and because of that, He sees us as loved, chosen, and set apart. We’re sanctified—not because we’re perfect, but because God has made us His own.”

Alice hugged Mr. Fluffernutter even tighter. “I like that. I want to remember that God loves me, even when I mess up.”

Ariel smiled and wrapped an arm around her sister. “Me too, Alice. We’re both learning, and that’s okay. What matters is that we keep trusting God and remembering that our identity is in Him, not in what we do.”

Alice nodded, her face thoughtful. “Grace and peace, just like Paul said?”

“Exactly,” Ariel said. “Grace and peace, no matter what. We’re set apart for God, and that’s what matters most.”

Ariel’s Journey of Growth in Faith

That evening, Ariel found herself reflecting on what she had learned about the Corinthians’ struggles. She sat on her bed, her journal open in front of her, and began to write.

“Today, I’ve been thinking about the Corinthians and how they struggled to understand who they were in Christ. They lived in a city full of people telling them what they should be, what they should want, and how they should live. I guess I feel like that sometimes too. At school, I get caught up in trying to be like everyone else—trying to be the best in class, to win awards, to make people like me. But I think I’m starting to understand what Paul was trying to tell them.

Being sanctified means that God has already set me apart. It means that I’m already enough because of Jesus, not because of anything I do. That’s hard for me to believe sometimes, especially when I feel like I’m not measuring up. But just like Paul reminded the Corinthians, I need to remember that my identity is in Jesus. God has called me, and He’s the one who will keep me strong.

I want to keep growing in my faith, even when it's hard. I want to remember that I don't have to be perfect—I just have to trust that God is working in me, just like He was working in the Corinthians.”

Ariel closed her journal, feeling a mix of hope and determination. She knew that her journey of faith was just beginning, and there would be times when she would struggle. But she also knew that, just like the Corinthians, she was set apart for God's purposes, and that gave her strength.

Alice peeked into the room, holding Mr. Fluffernutter. “Ariel, are you okay?”

Ariel smiled at her little sister. “Yeah, I'm okay, Alice. I'm just thinking about how we're both growing in faith. It's not always easy, but I know God is with us.”

Alice climbed onto the bed beside her. “I like that we're set apart for God. It makes me feel special.”

Ariel hugged her sister close. “You are special, Alice. And so am I. God has called us both, and He's never going to stop loving us or helping us grow.”

Alice grinned. “Grace and peace, right?”

“Right,” Ariel said, her heart full. “Grace and peace, no matter what.”

Ariel and Ryan Discuss Relying on God's Faithfulness

The next evening, Ariel and Ryan sat together on the porch, the sun setting in the distance. Ariel turned to her dad, her eyes thoughtful. “Daddy, I've been thinking more about what you said the other day—about God's faithfulness. How do I rely on that instead of just trying to do everything on my own?”

Ryan looked at his daughter, sensing the sincerity in her question. “That's a really important thing to think about, Ariel. It's natural to want to rely on ourselves, especially when we're facing challenges. But God calls us to trust in Him because He knows our weaknesses, and He wants to be our strength.”

Ariel frowned slightly. “But sometimes, I feel like I should be able to handle things on my own. Like if I try harder, then I won't need to ask for help.”

Ryan nodded. “I understand. It can be hard to let go of that mindset. But remember what Paul said to the Corinthians—they were enriched by God's grace, even though they weren't perfect. God didn't expect them to do everything by themselves. He wanted them to lean on Him, to find their strength in His faithfulness, not their own abilities.”

Ariel looked down at her hands. “So, when I'm struggling, I need to remind myself that it's okay to ask God for help?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said gently. “Relying on God doesn't mean we stop trying or that we give up. It means that we recognize that our strength comes from Him. When we face challenges, we can ask God to help us, to give us wisdom, and to carry us through. It's about trusting that He is always with us, and that His faithfulness will sustain us.”

Ariel nodded slowly. “I think I get it. It's not about being strong enough on my own—it's about letting God be my strength.”

Ryan smiled. “Yes. And that’s what Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand too. They didn’t have to be perfect; they just had to trust in God’s faithfulness. And it’s the same for you. God loves you, Ariel, and He wants to be the one you turn to when things get tough. He wants to be your source of strength.”

Ariel looked up at her dad, her eyes shining with a new understanding. “Thanks, Daddy. I’m going to try to remember that. It’s comforting to know that I don’t have to do everything by myself.”

Ryan hugged her gently. “You’re never alone, Ariel. God is always with you, and He’s always ready to help. All you have to do is trust Him and lean on His faithfulness. That’s where true strength comes from.”

Ariel smiled, a sense of peace settling over her. “Grace and peace, right?”

Ryan chuckled softly. “Grace and peace, my love. Always remember that God’s faithfulness is your strength.”

Family Discussion on God’s Grace

That same evening, as the family gathered in the living room for their devotion, Alice suddenly asked, “Daddy, what does it mean to have Jesus in the middle of everything?”

Ryan looked at Alice, touched by her question. “That’s a wonderful question, Alice. It means that Jesus is the center of everything we do—He’s the reason we love, the reason we forgive, and the reason we have hope. It means that our lives are built around Him, not just on Sundays, but every single day.”

Ariel chimed in, her curiosity piqued. “So, how do we keep Jesus in the middle of everything? How do we do that when things get busy or when we’re distracted?”

Ryan smiled at both of his daughters. “We do it by remembering His grace, by talking to Him in prayer, and by trying to love others the way He loves us. When we’re faced with a choice, we can ask ourselves, ‘What would make Jesus happy?’ It’s about letting His love guide our actions, even in the small things.”

Alice tilted her head thoughtfully. “So, even when I’m sharing my toys with a friend, that’s a way of having Jesus in the middle?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “When you share, when you’re kind, when you forgive—that’s showing Jesus’ love to others. And when we do that, we’re keeping Him at the center of our lives.”

Ariel nodded, understanding dawning in her eyes. “So, it’s not just about the big things—it’s about every little thing we do, letting Jesus guide us.”

Ryan hugged both of his daughters close. “That’s right. Grace isn’t just something we receive; it’s something that transforms us. It changes how we live, how we treat others, and how we see ourselves. When we keep Jesus in the center, His grace flows through everything we do.”

Alice grinned, holding Mr. Fluffernutter tight. “Grace and peace, right?”

“Grace and peace, always,” Ryan said, his heart full. “And remember, God’s grace is what sustains us. It’s what helps us to be more like Jesus, every single day.”

Ariel Ponders Unity and Fellowship

The next day, Ariel found herself sitting in her favorite spot by the window, gazing out thoughtfully. She was thinking about Paul's emphasis on unity and fellowship, and how it applied to her own life. She opened her journal again, wanting to write down her thoughts.

"Paul talked a lot about unity and fellowship in his letter to the Corinthians. He wanted them to remember that they were all part of one body, connected by their faith in Jesus. I wonder how I can apply that to my own life. I think about my church and my family—how sometimes we don't always agree or see things the same way, but we're still called to love each other and work together.

Paul's words make me realize that unity isn't about everyone being the same. It's about focusing on what brings us together—our shared faith in Jesus. In my church, that means being willing to listen to others, to serve, and to encourage each other, even when it's hard. In my family, it means being patient with Alice when she's being silly or helping out even when I don't feel like it.

I think Paul wanted the Corinthians to see that their differences didn't have to divide them. Instead, those differences could make them stronger if they chose to work together and love each other like Jesus loves us. I want to be someone who helps bring people together, not someone who causes division. I want to remember that my role is to build others up and to be a part of something bigger than just myself."

Ariel paused, her pen resting on the page. She thought about her own role in her church, the times she had helped with Sunday School, and the times she had felt too shy to speak up. Maybe being part of the body of Christ meant stepping out of her comfort zone, trusting that God would use her to encourage others.

"Daddy," Ariel called out as Ryan walked by the room. He stepped inside and sat down beside her. "I've been thinking about what Paul said about unity. How do I help build unity in our church or even in our family?"

Ryan smiled, his eyes filled with pride. "That's a beautiful question, Ariel. Unity starts with love—loving others the way Jesus loves us. It means being patient, being willing to serve, and putting others' needs before our own. It's not always easy, but it's what Jesus calls us to do."

Ariel nodded. "I think I understand. It's about focusing on what brings us together, not what makes us different. And it's about being willing to help others, even when it's hard."

"Exactly," Ryan said. "Paul wanted the Corinthians to remember that they were all part of the same family, even if they had different gifts or opinions. And it's the same for us. God has given each of us a role to play, and when we work together in love, we reflect the unity that Jesus prayed for."

Ariel smiled, feeling a sense of purpose. "I want to do that, Daddy. I want to help build unity in our church and in our family. I think that's what God wants me to do."

Ryan leaned over and kissed her forehead. "I'm so proud of you, Ariel. God has given you a beautiful heart, and I know He's going to use you to bring others closer to Him. Just remember, it's all about grace and peace."

