

t

TESTIMONY MAGAZINE | Where Our Story Intersects Faith and Culture

LIFESTYLE INHERITING A FAMILY

STORIES FROM A FOSTER PARENT'S JOURNEY

YOUR STORY YOU DON'T ARGUE WITH "SAFE"

A DAUGHTER REMEMBERS THE DAY HER DAD MADE IT HOME

EVERYDAY THOUGHTS ASK FOR HELP

LEARNING THE SIMPLICITY OF PRAYER

APRIL 2013, VOL. 94, NO. 4



CAPTURING BEAUTY

page 8

SPONSOR A COPY OF *TESTIMONY* FOR A PRISON INMATE—DETAILS INSIDE!

THE PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF CANADA



Photo © Sarah Powell www.sarahgrace.ca

CAPTURING BEAUTY

A young photographer's search for the handprints of God

by Lisa Hall-Wilson

When you browse through the online portfolio for Sarah Grace Photography on Facebook, you will be drawn in by images that capture life in all its innocence, beauty and peace. It might surprise you to learn that the photos weren't taken by a photographer with years of experience, but by a high school senior at Hamilton District Christian High School who's only been at it for just over a year.

Sarah Grace Photography was born out of tragedy, out of a desire to find God in heartache, to give meaning to what can never be explained. Sarah Powell lost her older brother, David, 22, in a car crash on December 11, 2009. David was on his way home from the University

of Waterloo, where he was a student. His last Facebook status was, "I want to run, jump and spread life in this world."

"This is a work of the heart for Powell, who learned how precious the photos of her brother and their family became after his death."

of Waterloo, where he was a student. His last Facebook status was, "I want to run, jump and spread life in this world."

"That was his essence," says Sarah. "We're a really close family. He was my closest brother and such a role model for all of us kids. It was very hard for each of us when he died."

A year ago last fall, Powell's mom, Karen, encouraged Sarah and her sister to find beauty. Armed with a digital camera, Sarah set out to find something beautiful every day. "I just love to find beauty in the world around me. After my brother died it was hard to find beauty, so intentionally setting out to find it was meaningful to me."

Powell began using the camera to express herself in her quest to find beauty, and through the lens of the camera found a renewed focus for life. With her mom's encouragement, Powell

became more and more interested in photography, eventually posting a couple of her photos on Facebook. "About five minutes later I started getting great responses," she says.

Sarah now specializes in portrait, child, engagement and family photography. Her work is characterized by bright, vibrant colours, engaging close-ups, and unique settings and poses. This is a work of the heart for Powell, who learned how precious the photos of her brother and their family became after his death. The photos captured a time and place the Powell family can't ever get back this side of heaven.

"I believe that when I take pictures it's capturing those memories for someone forever, and that's really meaningful to me. Kids grow up

and families move on, and to be able to capture that is really important," says Powell.

Sarah Grace Photography began as a way to honour her brother's memory and find beauty once again. It's now turned into a thriving business with hundreds of fans on Facebook. What are her plans for her business after high school? "Just go where it leads me," Powell says. "Go into it [photography] full time after I finish school, and then go into university for photography and a business course."

When asked what advice she would give to those who are grieving, Powell responded with simple but humble words. "If there's any way of finding beauty, use that gift. For me, [photography] was a great way to express my feelings."

Powell's perspective is a breath of fresh air and a restorative outlook that anyone suffering from loss or depression can benefit from. By plac-

ing the focus outside of herself, she was better able to see God's handprints on her life and on everything around her. God was still at work around her and within her. He had not forsaken her.

After interviewing Sarah, her passion and photography spoke to my heart. As someone who struggles with depression—not in a clinical sense, but with a general debilitating malaise—I've employed her focus on finding beauty. And I'm sharing what I find with my audience on Facebook. I began with the Joy Project where, throughout December, I posted about the places where I'd found joy in the season. Not only did it restore my own joy for the season, but people—many of whom I didn't know—sent me messages saying how much they enjoyed and benefited from my own journey.

I've declared 2013 my own "Year of Beauty" and will intentionally seek out the beauty around me and share it with my audience on Facebook. I'm not a photographer, so that journey manifests itself a little differently for me. Already, I've had others join me in this journey to seek out beauty.

Taking a few purposeful moments each day to find beauty leads me to think of the God who created it, and I remember to give thanks. And the malaise that haunts my steps and threatens to overwhelm me loses its power, as a shadow loses ground to the sun. My prayer is that, just as Sarah's sharing her story helped me, sharing what I find may help others, even in a small way.

Photography is a booming interest among teens. Smartphones and other hand-held devices have made taking photos easier than ever. Websites like Pinterest, Instagram, and Facebook allow young people to express themselves and share their point of view with the world. For anyone starting into photography, Powell's advice is to just get out there. "Go out and take pictures and experiment."

Lisa Hall-Wilson is a freelance writer who lives with her husband and three children in London, ON.

Sarah Powell is the 2013 recipient of the Flamborough Chamber of Commerce's Young Entrepreneur of the Year award, presented by the premier of Ontario in March 2013 at the Flamborough Hills Golf & Country Club. To view more of her photography, visit www.sarahgrace.ca.