

# Dear Gracie

By Lori Fuller

Church Magazines  
(Based on a true story)

*"I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee" (Isaiah 41:13).*

Gracie felt like she had been waiting in line at the fabric store forever! She was ready to go home and play with her toys. Then she saw a girl in line in front of her. The girl looked a little older than Gracie. She had braces on her legs and used crutches to help her stand. She turned and smiled. Gracie smiled back.

Saylor had spina bifida too.  
She knew how  
to help.

As they were leaving, Gracie was surprised when Mom reached out to stop the other mom.

"Excuse me," Mom said, "Could I ask why your daughter is using crutches?"

The other mom smiled. "This is Saylor, and she has spina bifida." Gracie's eyes opened wide as she looked at Saylor. "This is Gracie, and she has spina bifida too," Mom said.



Saylor's mom smiled at Gracie. "Do you have an owie on your back?"

Gracie nodded. She had a long scar on her back from a surgery she'd had right after she was born.

The two moms started talking. Gracie heard words like *surgery* and *treatments*. Gracie grinned at Saylor and said hi. Gracie liked Saylor right away. She learned that Saylor was nine, and she was nice. Gracie knew they would be great friends.

Finally they all said goodbye to each other. Gracie heard their moms make plans to meet again soon. She could hardly wait!

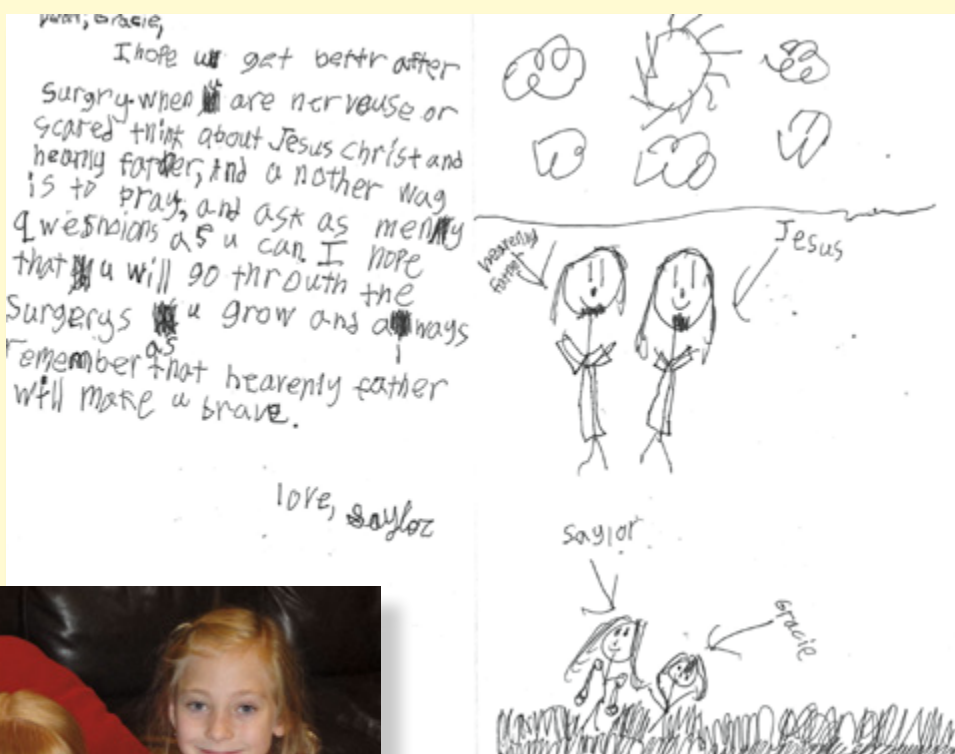
Back in the car, Mom said, "You know the surgery you're going to have soon? Well, Saylor had that surgery, and she's doing great! I felt the Holy Ghost tell me I should talk to her mom, and I'm glad I did."

"Me too!" Gracie said.

Gracie loved playing with Saylor. Even though Gracie was five, she and Saylor had lots to talk about. And Mom and Dad talked with Saylor's parents a lot too—mostly about the big surgery.

Thinking about the surgery made Gracie feel scared. She thought about the long scar on her back. She couldn't remember that surgery, but she would remember this one. She hoped it would make her better. Saylor had told her that everything would be OK.

A few weeks later, Gracie went to the hospital to get ready for the surgery. The halls of the hospital were bright and happy. There were paintings of blue whales



Gracie (left) with Saylor, and the card that Saylor made for Gracie before her surgery.

**Spina bifida** is a problem with the way a baby's spinal cord grows before birth. It can cause problems with legs, feet, or hips.

and other fun pictures on the walls. Gracie met with doctors and nurses who explained the surgery to her. She practiced moving the bed up and down and played with the remote for her little TV. They told her she could order chocolate milk every day! Maybe the surgery wouldn't be so bad.

When Gracie got home, she made a little hospital bed with her pillow and a laundry basket. She got a tray of snacks and pretended she was at the hospital. It would be fun. She tried not to think about the surgery.

A few days before surgery, Gracie got a card from Saylor. She had drawn a picture of Gracie with Saylor and Heavenly Father and Jesus. It said, "Remember that Heavenly Father will make you brave."

Gracie hugged her card tight. Saylor helped her be brave. Gracie knew Heavenly Father could help her be brave for the surgery too. ♦

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