



A Measure of *Grace*

April 2003
Volume 7, Issue 4

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

Grace Is Sometimes Received In Vain by Mary Heathman

Grace is always good news. Everybody wants to receive God's grace, particularly when we don't deserve it. That's why it is so difficult to understand when we see God's grace sometimes received in vain.

The scripture clearly teaches that, though grace is shown to the sinful, sinners do not always respond by desiring righteousness. Instead, even in the best of circumstances, they sometimes don't even turn toward God or acknowledge Him as their Lord.¹ It is easy to be confused by this reality. Grace is always so powerful (for an example of grace in action, see "Friend's Grace Motivates Change on page 7), it is rather disconcerting to see it tossed aside, rendered impotent by some who remain untouched by it.

It would be easy at this point to go into a theological explanation of how some people are just *predestined* to be outside of

(Continued on page 2)

Where Grace Abounds
P.O. Box 18871
Denver, Colorado 80218

Office: 303/863-7757
Fax: 303/863-7769

email: Wwga@aol.com
www.wheregraceabounds.org

Wwga
where grace abounds

Inside this issue:

Grace Is Sometimes...	1
Where Speaking Abounds	3
Reflections	4
Friend's Grace Motivates	7
March / Announcements	8

(Grace continued from page 1)

God's grace. Wouldn't it make sense that the **A**nchosen would be unimpressed and unmoved by the evidence of God's love? But even as I think along these lines, I argue with my own reasoning. Elsewhere in scripture we read, "*As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.*"² Apparently it is possible to be one of God's own, to be a recipient of His grace, yet all for naught! What a depressing thought!

My mind turns to my **A**fellow workers, @ those with whom I am yoked in kingdom work. It troubles me to think that some WGA staff or board members or leadership people might not grow in relationship with the Lord because they have received His grace in vain. It is unthinkable that some men and women in my church family might miss out on God's best because they remain untouched by His grace, the only Force strong enough to change their hearts.

But wait a minute! **What if it is I that receives His grace in vain?** Could it be that **I** might be the one who gets left behind, whose heart remains unchanged? Maybe in my own heart there lurks a **A**contempt for the riches of His. . . @ grace. Might I be the one who is **A**storing up wrath against @ myself? That thought moves beyond depressing to out-and-out fear!

Side Note: I know that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but sometimes it makes sense to rise up with an urgency like the disciples at the

*last supper, who, when He said one of them would betray Him, cried out to Him, **A**Lord is it I? @*

I find my mind and heart alert to the possibility that any of us, even His own children who have already walked with Him a good while, might ultimately be counted among those who have received God's grace in vain. It seems prudent then to look at just what sorts of folks are likely to render God's grace as of little use, and what one might do to avoid the likelihood of such a mistake.

What Sorts of Folks?

I am sure there are many ways in which we could dilute or deflect God's grace in our own lives. But as I think and pray and study the scriptures, two main categories come to mind: those who turn away from the core truths of the Gospel of Christ, and those who are caught up in legalism.

Turning Away from the Truth

I am reminded of the rich young ruler who turned away from Jesus, unable to accept Jesus= answer to his question. How often I have come to the Lord with a question that tore at my soul, yet turned away from Him when His answer required too much of me!

In the early eighties I was asking God **A**What is true about homosexuality? @ I studied and prayed, ranted and raved.

(Continued on page 5)

Lord, I don't know what to do with this; it's too big for me. My own sexuality has been a mess; I still don't understand it very well; how can I address anyone else's?



Where Speaking Abounds

By Scott Kingry

It makes sense that most youth groups and Sunday School classes would pounce on the romantic celebration of Valentines Day and take advantage of the occasion to talk about healthy relationships and sexuality—That's where we come in!

The staff had a very busy and productive month in February teaching Where Grace Abounds—here are some of the highlights!

Christian Ministries Convention

Where Grace Abounds has had an annual presence at this event, held at the Merchandise Mart, for the last few years. From February 6th-8th we had our traditional booth set up and were able to talk with the few brave people that would stop by and inquire. This year though, we proactively raised our visibility by conducting a radio interview—Mary and I got a brief chance to introduce WGA to listeners of KPOF Christian radio here in Denver. We also discussed our workshops (more proactive visibility) that we'd be teaching there over the next few days. Mary taught 2 workshops "*Someone I Love is Gay*" and "*How to Recognize Sexual Abuse in Children*". My workshop taught on Saturday was "*Unraveling Sexual and Emotional Roadblocks*". All were successful with about 20-25 people in attendance.

South Fellowship

This church deserves many accolades for

teaching a "sex education" curriculum every year to their 5th and 6th graders. Every February, Where Grace Abounds receives a Sunday morning of the program to speak on the issue of homosexuality. Mary, Karen and I were scheduled for this round and were greeted by 5 girls and 2 boys and the back of the classroom filled with their parents. Mary gave a little talk comparing WGA to a doctor's office or dentist's office—a *special place for people with special needs*—while Karen and I shared our own stories (mostly about how we felt at their age). Our heart as a ministry is heading into the area of "prevention" and we're excited about having these kinds of speaking prospects.

First Priority Singles

On February 16th, Mary had an opportunity to speak to about 50 men and women with First Priorities Singles, a ministry of 1st Presbyterian in Boulder. In honor of Valentines Day, her topic was "*The Purpose of Attraction*".

Trinity Presbyterian

Roger, being the ministry's official "booth set up guy", headed to Trinity Presbyterian on Sunday February 16th to represent Where Grace Abounds at this yearly missions fair. Roger had many good conversations with people that morning in between services and was able to hand out much of our literature.

Television Interview

Mary hit the small screen on Friday February 21st on a show called *Rocky Moun-*

(Continued on page 5)

Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Patrick Maschka

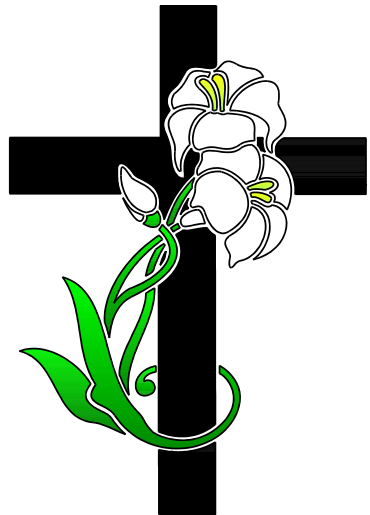
Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.
(James 4:14)

We live in a culture in which people plan ahead. Whether it's scheduling a faraway vacation, waiting for a big tax refund, or looking at our calendars to see what we'll be doing on a given day, we plan our lives to suit our interests and desires, and expect things to turn out the way we foresee. I am the first to admit that when life rolls along according to predictable routines, I feel more settled, more purposeful, and even more happy and able to embrace life. It is empowering to know what's around the next corner, and I find security in that knowledge.

Addressing the boastful planning he observed in his day, James labeled it as evil (James 4:15). He declares the sobering truth that our lives are but a mist that vanishes (4:16), and that we have no claim to even the next day of our lives. Planning and preparing are activities to be surrendered to the Lord, for he can take our lives away just as he gave them to us. His will is sovereign, and ours is to be submitted to his. It is humbling and convicting for me to look back on my life and see how the Lord's version of my journey has been by far the better course over the most promising of my big plans. I have often thought that if things had turned out in ways I had previously hoped, I could have been faced with more troubles than I had ever expected. I am also thankful for the many life events of which I had no foresight. The ones

God gave me the needed resources to surmount when they occurred, but which would have terrified me if I had known in advance they were coming.

I don't think we are supposed to sit around waiting, never making any plans and taking no action. What's important is knowing our place in the world, our smallness compared to our heavenly Father, and accepting that even our sharpest capabilities are feeble compared to his (see 1 Cor 1:20-25). When God's will is put before ours, he honors the desires of our hearts and our stepping out in faith (see Psalms 37:4, Hebrews 11).



(Speaking continued from page 3)

tain Celebration hosted by Dr. & Mrs. Dick Newman located on KRMT channel 41. During her interview, Mary discussed "The Parents Role in Addressing Sex Education in Schools".

Denver Christian High School

Every spring, Where Grace Abounds has a week to teach on homosexuality in the "Social Problems" class at Denver Christian High School. Each day from February 24th-27th a different topic was presented. Monday was devoted to teaching about AIDS, done by our friend Mike Tucker with HIV-Carelink. Tuesday, Mary taught on homosexuality from a biological, psycho-logical and theological perspective. Wednesday and Thursday were filled with testimonies from a parent's perspective and Karen and Roger shared their own personal experi-

ences. The class was comprised of about 12 juniors and seniors who had great questions and lively discussion. Yet another opportunity for some preventive measures.

Cherry Creek Presbyterian Youth

On Wednesday February 26th, Scott and Karen spoke to 50 youth from Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church. This group of kids had been studying (once again in honor of Valentines day) all kinds of issues regarding sexuality. Most of the time was spent on a great question and answer period about homosexuality.

MOPS

Mary spoke to 2 different MOPs (Mother's of Pre-schoolers) groups in Longmont during February. Her topic was "The Emotional Needs of Children." About 45 mothers were in attendance. ♦

(Grace continued from page 2)

And when the answer came, I didn't want to hear it. ***What is true about homosexuality is what is true about broken heterosexuality. Sexual sin is sexual sin.***@

I remember the moment that thought hit me. Instead of a nice tidy answer to teach my son and his friends, or a three-point sermon to preach to the Church, the Lord handed me a broad, sweeping picture of broken sexuality in general and pierced my heart with His desire to redeem it. The message was too big for me, the ramifications too far-reaching. I almost turned away; can't even really remember why I didn't.

But I do remember what I did. I took to my bed, curled up in a fetal position and said, ***Lord, I don't know what to do with this; it's too big for me. My own sexuality has been a mess; I still don't understand it very well; how can I address anyone else's? If You don't catch my heart up into Your vision, then I won't be able to follow You in this. I don't even know if I want to; change my heart, Lord.***@

Maybe the difference between turning away from or turning toward God has mostly to do with contrite hearts and broken spirits that come to the Lord in confession, allowing His kindness to lead them to repentance.

(Continued on page 6)

Caught Up In Legalism

Legalism isn't as easy to see from inside the faith as it is from the outside. I remember a friend of mine responding to my attempts to witness to him. A was saved once. The neighbor lady took me to church and paid my way to summer camp. The staff was running around saving people and hanging souls on their belts like scalps. I asked Jesus into my heart that summer, but I went back home to my s----- life; never heard from anybody again. They didn't care about me!@

Another comment from outside the camp: AYou Christians are more concerned about whether I obey your rules than you are about my loneliness. What does that say about your God?@

Why do I use these two folks=experience as an example of legalism? Well, I believe that legalism is more than just obsession with rules and regulations. It is a whole mindset that makes us a slave to the Aetter of the law@that kills, rather than to Ahe spirit of the law@that gives life.⁵ This sort of mindset is antithetical to the grace of God.

The grace of God is dispensed through the camp counselor who loves the campers so well in Jesus=name that, whether or not they say the Sinner's Prayer at the camp, they will from that summer on have a hunger and a taste for God. (And it is likely that at just the right moment for them, that appetite for God's love will inexorably draw them to God Himself.)

The grace of God is dispensed through the family who takes into its home, and

even enjoys, a woman so isolated that she can't even pull her own emotional weight. AGod sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing.@ (Psalms 68:6a)

But even in these examples there is the danger of legalism. If the camp counselor or the family serves people in order to earn God's favor, then even these wonderful acts of love will render the Aministrators@incapable of receiving God's grace. Their motivation will be based on gaining favor through their own works rather than as an overflow of God's grace at work in them.

Maybe the difference between legalism and living under grace has mostly to do with contrite hearts and broken spirits that come to the Lord in confession, allowing His kindness to lead them to repentance.

It seems to me that we are all in danger of receiving God's grace in vain. Any time I turn away from what I know God has asked of me, I am dishonoring the grace that has lavishly been poured out on me. Any time I **perform for the Lord**, even doing wonderful works of ministry, **instead of working hand-in-hand with Him**, I am trading His easy yoke and light burden for the hard and heavy yoke of legalism. Any time I hide my sin instead of confessing it and allowing the Holy Spirit to cleanse and change my heart, I refuse the grace for which Jesus died.

I want to receive His grace in its fullness and let His kindness bring me to quick repentance when I turn away. *Lord, I pray this is so for all of us. Come and*

(Continued on page 7)

Friend's Grace Motivates Change

by Bill White, as quoted in Leadership Weekly

Recently I witnessed an unusual accountability partnership at my church.

In an effort to break his habit of using profanity, Paul started meeting with another guy from church, and they set up an aggressive plan for holiness. Each Sunday, Paul would report to William how many times he cussed during the week, and he'd put \$5 in the offering plate for each incident. The first week cost Paul \$100. Although following weeks improved somewhat, he wasn't having the success he wanted and was losing a lot of hard-earned cash.

After the fourth week, William told Paul he had unilaterally changed the deal for the coming week, but he wouldn't tell Paul how. Paul wanted to know, but all William would say was, "Trust me. It will cost you both less and more."

The following Sunday before worship, Paul was looking a bit down, obviously having failed again. William put a hand on his shoulder and said, "Paul, this will cost you both less and more. It's called grace." At that he took out a check made out to the church, dated and signed by William. Only the amount was blank.

"Your sin still costs, but for you it's free. Just fill in the numbers. And next week there will be more grace."

That first week of grace cost William \$55, but the second only cost him \$20. There was no third week. It cost Paul too much to fill in those checks, so he quit sinning.

Reprinted from *Leadership Weekly*, March 18, 2003, Illustration of the Week, by Bill White, Paramount, California: Used by permission. ✠

(Grace continued from page 6)
guide us into the truth about Your grace.
I pray this in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen. ✠

land of uprightness they go on doing evil and regard not the majesty of the Lord. NIV

² 2Corinthians 6:1

³ Romans 2:4

⁴ Romans 2:5

⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenantC not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

¹Isaiah 26:10 *Though grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a*

MARCH AT A GLANCE

**March 8 - Cherry Creek Presbyterian
Missions Banquet**

**March 9 - Mary spoke to Cherry
Creek Presbyterian's singles
group**

**March 13th - Mary spoke at
Front range Community Col-
lege in an introduction to So-
ciology class.**

**Groups,
Discipleship Counseling,
and Mentoring**

Thursday Night Group

March 6th - 39 people

March 13th - 37 people

March 20th - Snow Day!

March 27th - 35 people

**The WGA staff provided about 10
hours of discipleship counseling and
mentoring each week during March.**

Sexuality AND THE Church 2003

On Wednesday, May 14th WGA is hosting a seminar for pastors and ministry leaders. Please invite your pastor to join Where Grace Abounds for a morning of education focusing on ministry to the sexually and relationally broken. If you have been blessed by WGA, this will be a great opportunity to introduce your pastor to the ministry. This event is for pastors and Christian leaders.

**Wednesday, May 14, 2003
8:30am -12:00pm
First Denver Friends Church**

If you are interested in finding out more information for your pastor, please call and ask for a brochure to be sent to you.

A Measure of Grace
is edited by
Elodie Ballantine Emig.

WGA Staff

Mary Heathman
Executive Director

Scott Kingry
Program Director

Karen Wood
Education Director

Roger Jones
Operations Director
Assistant Program Director

Where Grace Abounds exists to guide and support men and women who seek to understand sexuality and relationship, and to inspire all people to know and personally appropriate God's plan for their sexuality and relationships.

Printed in the USA
Copyright 2003