



A Measure of *Grace*

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A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

Grace Is ... Essential

By Mary Heathman

Over the past several months, I have written about grace from various perspectives (see Bits and Pieces on Grace.) This month I want to come back to the question with which I started. A group member asked me, "I get the 100% truth thing, butwhat is this grace stuff? I don't get it!"

See page 3 for
a recap on
Mary's
previous
articles on
Grace.

I have been looking for a short answer that I can give in the same context this question was asked: on the run, in the hallway after group, with just a minute or two to answer the question of someone that I may never see again. What can be said, in a brief moment, that speaks truth to the heart without trivializing the grace of God?

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Even as I write that I don't want to trivialize the grace of God, I have to smile at my own pomposity. Generations of men and women, wiser and more spiritual than I, have written vol-

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umes, yet not come close to exhausting the subject. I wonder, as I have many times in the writing of this series, whether I should just tuck my proverbial tail between my legs and shut up!

Nevertheless, the question isn't trivial and it still is asked fairly regularly (often in that same hallway or after a workshop I have taught). "What is grace and why does it make a difference?" It won't do to nod wisely, raise my eyes to heaven, and allude to the unfathomable mysteries of the God of the universe, though the mystery of God is a true and worthy concept, of course.

It seems to me that I need what is described in Proverbs 25:11: "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." It seems from this Scripture that the Lord approves of words aptly spoken. So, I borrow a prayer from Leanne Payne as I write this final article in the series on grace, "Lord, give me the words of a poet as I write." And I add my own prayer, "Lord, may your Spirit go before me and fill in all the cracks I leave as I write about your grace."

So, I forge ahead! Here is the statement I will make the next time someone asks, "What is grace and why does it make a difference?"

Grace is an environment where our heart is able to experience God personally.

Grace is essential, crucial to our heart's ability to relate to God.

Grace is indispensable in all of our relationships,

Grace is vital to our understanding of the character of God.


Grace is a fundamental plank in the platform of our Christian witness.

IN CONCLUSION:

What is grace and why does it make a difference? The answer is voluminous, and will take the rest of our lives to experience and express to others.

A definition of grace finally comes down to what grace does, as it only is known by its effects. But it does help me to understand that God's grace is the opposite of what the world dishes out to us on a regular basis.

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*"A word aptly
spoken is like
apples of gold in
settings of silver."
Proverbs 25:11*

Bits and Pieces On Grace

By Mary Heathman

The following are selected quotes from previous newsletter articles by Mary Heathman writing about God's grace:

"If we are to grow up into the fullness of Christ, all of us must come to terms with the whole Gospel. Our hearts and minds must be gripped with the powerful, uncompromising grace of God as well as His law."

"God's grace isn't magic. We still have to take responsibility for our actions and face the consequences of our sin. Nor is grace about me or you--it's all about God's character. ... grace is not cheap, but the costliest of all gifts--free to us, but costing God the excruciating pain of watching His Son suffer and die through no fault of His own."

"... when grace abounds in us, we will have the same attitude as Jesus did: meek and lowly, ... a rest for the souls of others (Matt 11:29); as leaders, we are servants to all (Matt 20:27);

washing one another's feet. (John 13:14-15)"

"More powerfully than the most powerful force on earth, God, often in His still small voice, speaks, and the listening heart is changed. His grace is a driving force that moves into the least opening of a fearful and resistant heart and makes it new and bold, righteous and humble. Grace will draw us; grace will save us from our life without Him."

"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



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change my heart, I refuse the grace for which Jesus died.”

“The grace of God envelops us when we least deserve it, when we have run away from Him, when we exhaust all our own resources before turning to Him. In face of our rejection of Him, He draws us close to His heart, sustaining us, filling the vacuum of our weakness with His strength.”

“It isn’t too far-fetched to interpret Jesus’ words as saying, ‘I am worth

it; there is nothing over the top or excessive about [the most extravagant] worship of me; It is appropriate to pour out the best you have in worship of me, for I am the Lord.’ The miracle is that Jesus turned right around and did the same for us.” “Grace is for giving—God lavishes grace upon us—He lavishes it upon others through us.”

“It is my prayer that we will grow in grace—the receiving and the giving.”



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Two antonyms for grace in the Thesaurus are “degrade” and “demean.” God’s grace is the antithesis to the meaning of these words.

God’s grace builds up, sometimes supernaturally re-creates, that which the world degrades in us. God’s grace infuses with value that which the world demeans in us.

It is my prayer that all of God’s people “faithfully administer God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10), as we all share in God’s grace” together (Philippians 1:7b).



Stay Tuned!



**Look for the
results of
our March survey
in next month’s
newsletter.**

Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Patrick Maschka

Search me, O God, and know my heart (*Psalms 139:23*)

I expect many are familiar with this typical scene in a police television drama or movie. A suspect is slammed against a car or a wall so the officers of the law can feel up and down the alleged criminal's body, searching for weapons or possible contraband. Whether the person is guilty or innocent, the forced search creates a picture of powerless submission, and the outcome is always certain: if the person is hiding something, it will be found.

The psalmist invites a search of a very different kind, but it is one that is no less vulnerable or purposeful. It is the request of someone who knows himself to be a sinner, and no force by God is needed for the submission. I can think of sporadic times in my life when I have been fully open to such a search, to having a bright light illuminate the darkest parts of my soul. In those times, I have experienced horror, humility, awe and security all together. More often, though, I have habitually selected what I can handle revealing to God, and offer up my limited, albeit sincere confession. My editing and hiding, of course, are ridiculous, and Psalm 139 is an abid-

ing reminder that God's presence cannot be escaped, nor can his scrutiny (see also Heb 4:13). This could render a believer immobilized with fear, unless the Lord's constant and thoughtful guard is seen for the protection and security that it is (139:17-18). Having previously acknowledged that the Lord already conducted a thorough inspection (139:1), the writer opens his heart for more, asking for a deeper search, expressing by faith the knowledge that a continuous examination will lead him in the way everlasting (139:24).

Being searched from head to toe and inside out is not something ordinarily thought of as comfortable. God's watch over us, though, is an expression of his care meant to comfort us. When we acknowledge his presence and sovereignty, and accept that we fall short of his glory (Rom 3:23), an eagerness for being searched will result. Having our hidden ways brought to light will not feel like a violent, invasive assault, but rather an intimate embrace with the one who knows all and still loves us.



Father

By a WGA Group Member

I loved my father when I was growing up: I still do. He died May 2, 1979, 2:30 am. I was 16. He loved babies, and I was the youngest, so I was always his baby. Unfortunately, that meant he was over protective. He wasn't teaching me to step out, have confidence or what it meant to be a man. He wanted his baby to cuddle and nurture. When I was 14, he quit drinking, and with the alcohol went the apron strings. Suddenly he was encouraging me to step out, giving me confidence and teaching me what attitudes and attributes a man should have. All of our family dynamics got better. I had a father, a true father. A year and a half later he was diagnosed with cancer. Six months after that he was gone.

Through all of this and afterwards was God and my church in California. Two different pastors tried to be a mentor to me, not just in my walk with God, but in life in general. They wanted to be a "father to the fatherless" in a very appropriate manner. But it is hard for things to last when your church goes through five pastors in nine years.

September 1997

Father, Daddy I want to hug You,
For You are the only father I have left.
I want to curl up in Your lap and bury my face in Your chest,
Like I would do with my earthly father.
But he is gone, You took him away,
It was not Your fault, he chose to smoke,
But You could have healed him.
Why didn't You heal him?
You've healed so many others.
I know he wasn't perfect, he had some serious problems,
But I can't even tell him I forgive him.
And I want to tell him I forgive him.
He left when he started to teach me what it meant to be a man.
I don't know...
I don't know what one is; I don't know if I am one.

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Men don't quit, I do.

Who will teach me? I want to know.

You brought others in my life,

Pastors who came to me and said,

"I will teach you how to be a good Christian man."

But they went away too, just as things really started to get going.

It's like having your dinner removed while you're still chewing the first bite.

They were kicked out or driven off by hard hearted congregations,

Who wanted to keep the power themselves.

So they went away too,

But it wasn't their fault or Yours.

I have gone to others who say,

"You should have a 'Paul, a Barnabas, and a Timothy.'"

I have gone to them and said, "Would you be my Paul."

And they said, "Yes."

But meeting after meeting got canceled until I called things off because they were too

Busy.

And yes, they were too busy – it wasn't their fault, or Yours.

So who will teach me Father? There is no one left.

How can I be a Paul to someone with no model to go by?

Two have come to me and said,

"Would you be my Paul?"

I said yes and failed them miserably.

One still follows You, the other is far away.

I was no Paul to them.

Who will teach me, Oh Lord?

It must be You, for there is no one left.





MAY AT A GLANCE

Groups, Discipleship Counseling, and Mentoring

Thursday Night Group

May 1st - 29 people

May 8th - 35 people

May 15th - 27 people

May 22nd - 39 people

May 29th - 53 people

Orientation meeting - 6 people

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

May 4th - WGA Leadership Meeting

May 14th - Sexuality and the Church Seminar at First Denver Friends Church.

May 20th - Scott Kingry spoke at a men's group at Bear Creek Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

May 24th - Growth Group, a WGA group focused on resolving issues with the opposite sex, ended.



JUNE & BEYOND

June 18th - Commitment Group, a WGA group focused on resolving issues with the same sex, ends.

July 17th - Doing a presentation for the interns of Prodigal Gatherings, a local ministry for kids on the streets.

July 21st - 26th - The WGA staff and others from WGA groups will be attending the 28th annual Exodus Conference in Orlando, Florida.

August 24th - Speaking at Celebration, a local church.

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A Measure of Grace
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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.

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