



# A Measure of Grace

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## The Blue Side of Lonesome

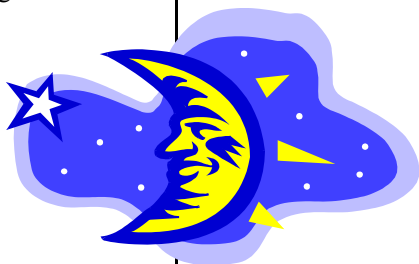
By Mary Heathman

One popular film a couple of years ago, still a favorite in movie rental stores, opens with Bridget Jones alone in her apartment, singing along with Jamie O'Neal, her tears and frustration building to a crescendo as she bellows out "*All by myself. . . I don't wanna be all by myself anymore!*" She mimed the percussionist with wild arm-waving and dramatic beating of the air with her "drum sticks."

My companions and I laughed with the rest of the audience. But some of us also cried right along with Bridget—her loneliness all too familiar to us.

The most popular music has always been that which expresses the hearts' cry of those

(Continued on page 2)



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### Inside this issue:

The Blue Side of Lonesome	1
Teens: Sex & Pornography	3
Reflections	5
August at a Glance	8
September & Beyond	8

(Blue continued from page 1)

who yearn for love or have just lost the same. Some of our readers who are “classic country” fans have already recognized the title of this month’s article as the name of a song released by RCA and made popular by Jim Reeves in 1966:

*“I’m just on the blue side of  
lonesome,  
right next to the Heartbreak Hotel,  
in a tavern that’s known as Three  
Teardrops,  
on a barstool, not doin’ too well.”*

Did you have the urge to laugh?  
Me too—always do!

But hokey as the words may seem, the fact is that we can easily exchange the image of the Three Teardrops tavern and a bar stool for:

- Butter pecan ice cream at midnight—to fill the empty places,
- The fourth movie this week—to escape the daily grind of reality,
- Happy Hour every day after work—to forget your unhappiness,
- Buying lots of new stuff—to forget the disillusionment of the old stuff,
- Chain-reading romance novels—to live someone else’s life rather than our own,
- Or another favorite comfort or medication—to escape life’s pain,

and we become aware of ourselves in the song. We find that whatever the coping mechanism, the core issue is the same: our hearts ache with a yet unsatisfied yearning for love, and the pain of that fact keeps us looking for love in any handy place we can find..

We know that love is the answer to all that ails us. As Jamie O’Neal goes on to sing in *All By Myself*:

*“Hard to be sure,  
sometimes I feel so insecure,  
and love, so distant and obscure,  
remains the cure.”*

Love remains the cure for what ails us. And loneliness is often what ails us.

In a Harvard Mental Health letter some years back, I remember a one-paragraph report on a study done on counseling clients whose presenting problem was loneliness. Up until that time, loneliness was treated as a side issue, and counsel-



(Continued on page 6)

# Teens: Sex & Pornography

By Scott Kingry

## Sexuality & the Church 2003

In May, we had our fourth annual event for pastors and church leaders called "Sexuality and the Church". It was a wonderful day of continuing dialog about sexuality and the church's response to views of sex and gender roles in our current culture.

This year our main focus was working with youth and sexuality. In our growing concern regarding "prevention" (educating adults and youth about healthy sexuality and relationships earlier and earlier) we wanted to focus on this vulnerable age group in light of our society's chilling definition of sexuality. Here are some staggering statistics and resources for youth and parents regarding sex, pornography usage and sexuality in the media.

## Internet Pornography and Kids

According to NetValue, children spent 64.9% more time on pornography sites than they did on game sites in September, 2000. Over one quarter (27.5%) of children age 17 and under visited an adult web site, which represents three million un-

derage visitors. Of these minors, 21.2% were 14 or younger and 40.2% were female.

**Source:** "The NetValue Report on Minors Online" Business Wire December 19, 2000

Nearly a third (31%) of kids age 10-17 from households with a computer, say they have seen a pornographic web site.

**Source:** "Survey Shows Widespread Enthusiasm for High Technology." 1999 NPR online

## Teens and Sex

According to the most recent data, 61% of all high school seniors have had sexual intercourse, about half are currently sexually active, and 21% have had four or more partners.



(Continued on page 4)

(Teens continued from page 3)

Although other developed countries have similar rates of early sexual intercourse, the United States has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world. In addition to pregnancy, early sexual intercourse carries the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD), including HIV. Adolescents have the highest STD rates. Approximately one fourth of sexually active adolescents become infected with an STD each year, accounting for three million cases, and people under the age of 25 account for two thirds of all STD's in the United States.

**Source:** "Sexuality Contraception American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Public Education, 1/2001, [www.aap.org/policy/re0038.html](http://www.aap.org/policy/re0038.html)

## Cybersex/Online Advances & Kids

Based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,501 youth ages 10 to 17 who use the Internet regularly, approximately one in five received a sexual solicitation or approach over the Internet in the last year. One in thirty-three received an aggressive sexual solicitation --a solicitor who asked to meet them somewhere; called them on the telephone; sent them regular mail, money or gifts. One in four had an unwanted exposure to pictures of naked people or people having sex in the last year.

**Source:** "Report Statistical Highlights." from the National Center for Missing and

Exploited Children, Crimes Against Children Research Center and Office of juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 6/00

## Sex on Television

"By the time adolescents graduate from high school, they will have spent 15,000 hours watching television, compared with 12,000 hours spent in the classroom ...American media is thought to be the most sexually suggestive in the Western hemisphere. The average American adolescent will view nearly 14,000 sexual references per year, yet only 16 of these references deal with birth control, self-control, abstinence, or the risk of pregnancy or STDs. In a recent content analysis, 56% of all programs on American television were found to contain sexual content. The so-called "family hour" of primetime television (8:00-9:00 PM) contains on average more than eight sexual incidents, which is more than four times what it contained in 1976. Nearly one third of family hour shows contain sexual reference...."

**Source:** Sexuality, Contraception, and the Media" American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Public Education. 1/2001 [www.aap.org/policy/re0038.html](http://www.aap.org/policy/re0038.html)

**See Page 7 for some great websites for parents and youth regarding sexuality & pornography.**



## Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

*By Patrick Maschka*

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**B**e still and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)

I frequently enjoy an early-morning jog to start my day. During summers in Colorado, that time of day is often the only time when I can be outdoors without the intense hot sun beating down on me. Cars and other people only occasionally pass me by, and I can listen to the sounds of my neighborhood waking up as the dawn breaks. Sometimes I use this time and atmosphere to pray, but I am never surprised when I reach home again and realize that my thoughts were on everything except my intended conversation with God.

I suppose every minister has preached it, and every Christian has believed it: we must have our "quiet time" with God. Why is it so difficult? Living with noise and activity has become a way of life for many of us. Truly, we even seek or create much of the dreaded noise we want to escape. I admit I am among the many who have complained that I just can't seem to get in touch with God, and I've asked Him to be bigger and noisier than everything else around me. It hasn't worked. I can learn a lesson from Elijah, and wait for the quiet whisper of the Lord (1

Kings 19:12), but I still want God to keep up with me rather than slow down myself. Even when I want to slow down, living in seemingly perpetual whitewater prevents me from being still and calm.

I am imagining that when the psalmist was still, everything else was still also. No radios, no traffic, no hum of a million volts of electricity, just the sounds of the world as God created it. Sounds wonderful? That's why ministers preach it and Christians want it. Somehow, in some way, we must take the time to be with and listen to our God. It is only through Him and with Him that we will ever experience healing and peace.



ors and therapists preferred to zero in on the underlying problems. What they found, however, was that loneliness could be such a crippling problem that the pain of it prevented the client from making any progress at all until the loneliness was addressed and resolved.

This little report on a psychological study verified for me what I already knew personally and observe in the lives of people who come to WGA for help with their relational and sexual difficulties. When people are chronically lonely (defined by the dictionary as “sad or dejected as a result of a lack of companionship or separation from others”), they experience such feelings of desolation that they are literally incapable of working on any other issues, no matter how pressing they might be.

That reminds me of something the apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:17-18 “. . .and you, being rooted and grounded in love, will be able, together with all the saints, to understand the height, depth, breadth, and width of God’s love.” People whose loneliness leaves them

“joyless and disconsolate” (Webster, again) are people who have never been rooted and grounded in love; they sometimes literally cannot even understand God’s love until they have been gathered into relationship, soaked in grace, paid attention to and enjoyed as a mother or father enjoys their children.

Just as a baby cannot enjoy the benefits of solitude because of its

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constant and pressing need to be nurtured and fed by its parents, so a psychological orphan has a constant and pressing need to be cared for by spiritual parents and siblings. They need a surrogate family within which they can heal and grow up.

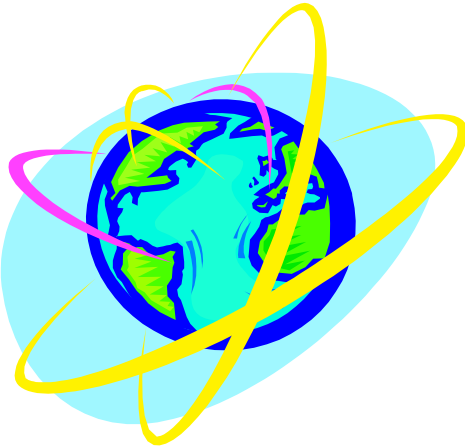
Where Grace Abounds is such a rooting and grounding place. We want to be God’s agent (His paraklete), one who draws alongside people who need connection, who need a place where they are understood, who want to understand God’s love, but can’t yet.

That is the proper place of the Body of Christ in the business of drawing people into the light of God’s love,

(Continued on page 7)

## Websites to Check Out Resources for Parents and Teens

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[www.protectkids.com](http://www.protectkids.com)

- Has a parent's Safety Guide
- Tips 4 Teens by Teens
- Harmful Effects of Pornography

[www.freetobeme.com](http://www.freetobeme.com)

- For youth struggling with homosexuality
- Great articles and resources

[www.ncpcf.com](http://www.ncpcf.com)

National Coalition for the Protection of Children & Families, protecting children and families from the harms of pornography and its messages.

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the healing power of His presence. We are to be the family within which God sets the solitary. (Psalm 68:6) And then we are to love, teach, warn, encourage, exhort, comfort, bear burdens for, and otherwise support one another.

Sounds like a *Mission Impossible*, doesn't it? How can any environment live up to such a high calling? Well, of course we can't! But we can make ourselves available, and pray that the Lord will allow us the privilege to minister in His name, and that He will send His Spirit to

guide and support—to indwell us—and in His power alone we can take on the Lord's yoke and burden daily. The WGA leadership team and I covet—need—your prayers to strengthen us in our work—that we might find the yoke as easy and the burden as light as Jesus promised it would be.

And this is our prayer for you as well—that the Lord will bless you in your respective ministries, churches, and family relationships. Thank you for your support!





## AUGUST AT A GLANCE

### **Groups, Discipleship Counseling, and Mentoring**

Thursday Night Group  
August 7th - 41 people  
August 14th - 48 people  
August 21st - 39 people  
August 28th - 40 people  
Orientation meeting - 20 people

The WGA staff provided about 12 hours of discipleship counseling and mentoring each week during August.

August 12th - WGA booth at the Next Level Church.

August 23rd - Ministry event—BBQ

August 27th - 28th - WGA Staff annual planning for 2004.



## SEPTEMBER & BEYOND

September 23rd, October 28th - Speaking at New Heights Center, a local church.

October 1st - Mary Heathman will be speaking at the Aurora campus of Colorado Community Church. "Mending a Relationally Broken Society" is the title of her talk.

October 5th - Participating in Missions Service at First Denver Friends Church.

October 29th - Mary Heathman will be speaking at the Englewood campus of Colorado Community Church. "Mending a Relationally Broken Society" is the title of her talk.

November 13 - 15th - Restoring the Glory Conference in Denver.

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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.*

*A Measure of Grace*  
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