



A Measure of Grace

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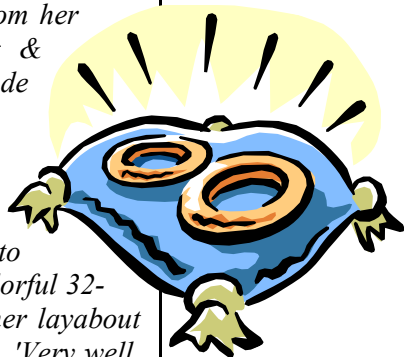
Looking For a Place to Stand by Mary Heathman

"Consider the tale of Michael and Tonya Hartsell of Wilmington, N.C. The Hartsells, according to the Associated Press, were stunned-and angry-when their first-grade daughter last week brought home from her public-school library a book titled King & King, written and illustrated by Linda de Haan and Stern Nijland."

This is how Joel Belz opens his article, "All over but the Brimstone," in *World Magazine*, April 3, 2004. He goes on to "defer to *Publishers Weekly* for a summary of the colorful 32-page story: *When a grouchy queen tells her layabout son that it's time for him to marry, he sighs, 'Very well,*

Mother.... I must say, though, I've never cared much for princesses.' His young page winks. Several unsatisfactory bachelorettes visit the castle before 'Princess Madeleine and her

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brother, Prince Lee' appear in the doorway. The hero is smitten at once. 'What a wonderful prince!' he and Prince Lee both exclaim, as a shower of tiny Valentine hearts flutters between them. First-time co-authors and artists de Haan and Nijland matter-of-factly conclude with the royal wedding of 'King and King,' the page boy's blushing romance with the leftover princess, and the assurance that 'everyone lives happily ever after.'"

One doesn't usually associate the issue of gay marriage with children's stories. But even a brief search on Amazon.com, or public and school library databases will show how far gay ideology, including gay marriage, has permeated our culture. It has had a far-reaching impact in our society. It isn't just a theoretical, theological, sociological, psychological (often not even logical) debate. It has seeped into our lives at the most personal and intimate levels. For the Hartsells it came home from school with their first grade daughter's homework. At the risk of stating the obvious, things are getting serious!

Things are serious indeed, and not limited to gay issues. In my opinion, our society's view of sexual morality

is such that, if we don't grapple constructively with the realities surrounding sexuality, if we don't educate ourselves, teach our children, and vote our consciences in our municipal, county, state and nationwide elections, then we may find one day soon, if it isn't already so, that other voices have prevailed, even in the formation of our children's minds and hearts. And if we don't pray for and follow God's guidance (2Chronicles 7:14), to turn and repent from our own sexual and relational sins, we will lose any credibility in the discussion in our society as well.

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Last month I said that I find it difficult to answer the question, "What is your position on gay marriage?" The previous paragraph reveals one of the most important reasons why this is so. I don't think we have a problem with gay ideology in our society. I think the problem is sexual immorality and brokenness in general, of which gay ideology is only one aspect. If sexual behavior is being addressed in the political and legal arena (I am not sure that it ought to be), then I think we should be focusing on all forms of sexual misbehavior, not just that of homosexual men and women. Furthermore, I don't

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Biblical References on Homosexuality

Compiled by Mary Heathman

Specific references to homosexuality:

Four in the Old Testament:

Genesis 19:1-25

Judges 19:22-30

Leviticus 18:22

Leviticus 20:13

Five in the New Testament:

Romans 1:24-28

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

1 Timothy 1:8-11

2 Peter 2:6-10

Jude 7

Selected passages also relevant to a biblical view of sexuality:

Genesis 2:18-25

Proverbs 18:22

Mark 7:21

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

Romans 6:13, 13:13

1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-19

Galatians 5:19-21

Colossians 3:5

Revelation 21:8; 22:15

Other relevant scriptures:

The New Testament repealed various Old Testament ceremonial Jewish laws: Acts 10:12-15; Colossians 2:11-16; Romans 14:17. But, the Old and New Testament are consistent on moral law. Jesus said that He did not come to abolish the law: Matthew 5:17.

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believe that the immorality of people who believe themselves to be gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgendered is any more sinful than the immorality of heterosexual people.

I know that most Christians would agree that God does not rate sin, that there is no such thing as the greatest sin. However, to hear what is being said in the public arena, one might not get this impression. Sometimes I am embarrassed by the conservative witness to our society, even when I know that the content of what is being said is true. I cringe because of the attitude that seems to be behind it—as if heterosexuals are morally superior simply by virtue of their sex-

ual orientation.

I like what Phillip Yancey had to say while moderating a discussion recently on a website called the Conversation Café: *"Interesting, isn't it, that in the Gospels Jesus seems most upset over the sins of hypocrisy and legalism (Matthew 23 and Luke 11) and has nothing to say about issues like abortion and homosexuality, which so exercise the church today. Paul included sins like disobedience to parents in his list of others such as patricide and incest. Perhaps the point is that the worst danger is to label someone as "evil" and thus enjoy a stance of moral superiority. Evil does exist, but as soon as we la-*

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Reflections:

Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

Dolphins

Let not your hearts be troubled—believe in me. In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also. John 14: 1-3

The amphitheatre was filled to capacity--Brad and I just missed seeing the dolphin show in Chicago's Shedd Aquarium last month. As we wandered the exhibits, however, we discovered the underwater viewing room of the dolphin show going on above. As we watched, a dolphin circled the tank, gaining speed and then shot straight up, through the ceiling of water above. It looked like he had shot through a pane of opaque glass, scattering diamonds in his wake and disappeared. He was gone and gone and gone and then suddenly, he torpedoed back through the ceiling like an ecstatic silver missile. He circled the tank with sheer joy, excitement rippling through him like electricity. Then two more dolphins joined him in his circling and at some unseen command, they dived to the bottom

of the tank, turned and shot up through the water, through the glass ceiling with perfect, Air Force jet precision into the unseen and unknown. Again the forever wait as the diamonds dissipated. Then they rocketed back through the ceiling as one, splitting into three symmetrical prongs as they skimmed the bottom of the tank. It was breathtaking.

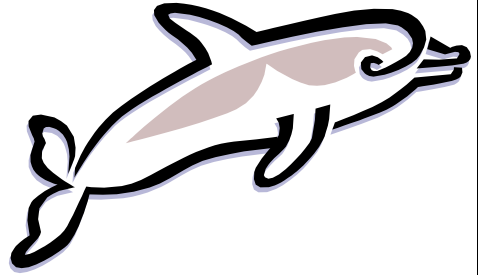
I know what was happening above the surface of the water; I've seen dolphin shows before. But I found myself wondering, "What if this was the only view I'd ever had? What would I decide about what had happened when the dolphins disappeared?" I found myself thinking about life after death; about how different things might be on the other side of that ceiling. What happens there? What if I just disappear?

I could picture Jesus, giddy as a dolphin after his resurrection—having broken the barrier of death, torpedoing back through the glass ceiling, splashing back down again shiny with diamonds. "Wait until you see what's on the other side! Wait until you trade this water for air! Wait until you see the crowd that is waiting to cheer for you! Gather speed! Get ready! Don't be afraid!"

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This is a bit much to get from a dolphin exhibit—I am well aware of that. But the sheer joy in those animals was contagious, how much more the joy of the One who made them? He doesn't want us to be afraid. He went before us so that we wouldn't have to be.



Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. Hebrews 2:14 15

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bel the external we are in danger of repeating the sins of the Pharisees, which angered Jesus most. "

That said, however, it is true that heterosexual sinners are not beating upon our collective consciousness insisting we accept their behavior as right, good, and worthy of solemnizing in our courts and churches. It is the gay activist that brings to society the issue of gay rights, gay marriage. It is the out-front-and-center gays and lesbians who are demanding attention, refusing the "don't ask, don't tell" approach their metaphorical ancestors accepted without public comment. And, of course, the media helps keep it in our faces every day.

So, how shall we respond? What will best represent God's heart and mind toward people who want their same-sex unions celebrated and made official? Where is the solid rock of truth on this issue that we can stand on with confidence?

Last month I wrote that "I believe that it is our responsibility to expose and resist darkness wherever we find it, and speak truth and light to take its place." This conviction came out of a severe emotional trial for me and my family that started in 1972, when I confronted my ex-husband about his sexual abuse of our daughter.

The sense of betrayal I felt for my daughter, the violation of her inno-

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cence, had almost crippled me, but I couldn't give in to the emotional and spiritual paralysis that threatened to swallow me up. I did some research, called the police and social services and they took down the information but said that with so little evidence they couldn't do anything.

I realized that it was my responsibility to protect my daughter and deal with her father, so I set boundaries around his relationship with the kids—including no overnight visits. And even these visits were contingent upon his getting some help; he went to counseling at my insistence.

He did everything I asked, but I still wasn't at ease. In addition to all the cautions I had wrapped around his time with our children, I also had a strong inclination to tell his second wife and his parents and siblings what had happened. It seemed to me that the injustice that had been done needed to be brought out into the open.

I wrestled with myself, alternately feeling justified in my desire to expose injustice, and then interpreting my feelings as vindictive and punitive. When I prayed and searched the Word for guidance and direction, I felt pulled into two different directions: either speaking the truth (Zechariah 8:16) or not letting my hatred of my ex-husband have its way, but instead letting love cover over a multitude of sins (Proverbs 10:12; 1 Peter 4:8). And of course, I was fur-

ther haunted by the belief that if I didn't forgive him, my own sins would not be forgiven (Matthew 6:15).

At that time I didn't know that forgiveness doesn't mean not holding people accountable for their actions, and that speaking the truth can also be an act of love. In my limited understanding at the time, I finally came to the conclusion that I should let matters drop. Over the years, I did keep checking in with my daughter and was confident that her father was not repeating his offense against her.

But several years later, I heard that one of my ex-husband's step-daughters, now fourteen years old, had attempted suicide. And I found out that the reason she was in such distress was because her step-father had been abusing her and her sister for years.

I was stricken! Because my daughter had come to me immediately, it had not occurred to me that his step-daughters wouldn't tell their mother if he abused them. I was horrified to realize that, when I opted to not tell their mother what had happened to my daughter, I had withheld information from her that she might have used to protect her own two girls!

I still cringe at the cost of that decision. It was no comfort to know that I made that decision with the best intentions. Out of the ashes of those good intentions gone wrong, I decided that telling the truth is always a

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good idea, and that the best response in any situation is to find a way as quickly and lovingly as possible to tell the truth, no matter what the cost.

I believe that many of the proponents of gay marriage have the best of intentions. I also believe that many of those who condemn homosexuals believe their motives are righteous. But I don't believe that either of these parties are standing on the solid rock of truth.

It is that bedrock of truth that I seek as I explore these issues. As we pray

for God's guidance in our response to gay activism, may we all pray that the Lord will reveal to us the truth about sexuality, about marriage, about the needs of our children and the effects of our choices and attitudes toward these things.



Last month, WGA hosted two seminars. Following are updates on both.



Seminar Updates April 2~3, 2004

Sexuality and the Church: Breaking Down Barriers to Healthy Sexuality

There were 80 pastors and Christian leaders in attendance at this seminar, which was held the morning of April 2nd. Topics covered included *Sexuality and Pastoral Care: Four Obstacles Hindering Effective Ministry*, taught by special guest Sy Rogers. Other topics covered were *Guilt and Shame in the Healing Process*, *Gay Men-Lesbian Women: The Differ-*

ences Are Important, and Why Aren't They Growing? Exploring the Long-Term Consequences of Abuse.

Redeemed Sexuality: Understanding God's Plan for the Church in a Sexually Compulsive Culture

There were 103 men and women in attendance at this seminar, which was held April 2-3. The seminar was taught by Sy Rogers. Topics included *Five Categories of Sexual Sin in the Church*, *Why Christians Will Have Sexual Struggles*, and *Realistic Expectations About Redemption and Recovery*.

))) **APRIL**)))

Thursday Night Group

April 1st - 61 people
 April 8th - Maunday Thursday Dinner
 April 15th - 55 people
 April 22nd - 41 people
 April 29th—60 people
 Orientation meeting - 13 new people

Discipleship Counseling and Mentoring

The WGA staff provided about
 13 hours of discipleship
 counseling and mentoring
 each week last month.

**April 2nd—Sexuality and the
 Church seminar for pastors and
 ministry leaders**

**April 2-3 - Redeemed Sexuality
 Seminar**

**April 12th - Scott Kingry spoke at
 Denver Seminary**

**April 22-24 - Restoring the Glory
 Conference at First Presbyterian in
 Boulder.**

**April 25th - WGA presentation for
 local church's men's group**

MAY & BEYOND

**May 1st - Mary Heathman presented
 to a group of youth at The 3rd
 Christian Reformed Church**

**July 20-24th - Exodus International
 Conference at Azusa Pacific (Greater
 LA Area)**

**June 11th - WGA is participating in
 the Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting
 of Friends.**

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Purpose Statement

*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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