



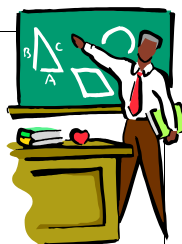
A Measure of Grace

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What Have I Learned? Part 2

By Mary Heathman



Last month, I began my article with a story which illustrated “Truth in Action” and “Grace in Action,” and a list of lessons on the topic “What Have I Learned?” This month, we will pick up with lesson #3. In review, the first two lessons are...

- **First lesson: Grace and truth, are two sides of a coin, not two different coins.**
- **Second lesson: Grace and Truth are complementary and compatible.**

Lesson # 3: Living with Grace and Truth as simultaneous priorities has consequences (good news and bad news here).

Bad News: We make mistakes; we fail.

I remember when I first started the ministry and was feeling inadequate, especially when it came to counseling people. It really is an awesome responsibility to sit with people and hear some of their deepest concerns. I wanted to be a help, not a hindrance. I prayed along those lines, telling God that I was willing to do this, but I needed him to promise me that He

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wouldn't let me hurt anybody.

Silence came in response! But the leading from Him to counsel increased, and people came to me with their pain and confusion. I prayed harder, the same prayer, "Just promise me you won't let me hurt people!"

Silence came again and more pressure, more people.

Finally, I prayed differently, crying, "Lord, I want to do what you are asking me to do, but I am afraid I will hurt people."

He responded: "You will hurt people, but I won't let you hurt them beyond my ability to turn it around for their good."

What I wanted was not to make mistakes. I still want to speak perfectly gracefully and perfectly truthfully 100% of the time. The insistence on that assurance, of course, led to paralysis, and I wasn't doing much of anything!

What God says is, "Trust me with your fear and inadequacy and I will show you miracles! I will heal them in spite of you; I will show myself strong in your weakness; I will make a way where there is no way. Just trust me and obey me in this."

So the Bad News is that we will make mistakes; the Good News is that God will take even our mistakes and weave them into a beautiful provision for us and for those He wants us to serve.

More Bad News, Which is also Good News: We can't predict the outcome—no cause and effect to track in the living out of Grace and Truth. This was bad news to me because—

well, I wanted to see results! I wanted some evidence that the investment was having an effect. But in the big picture of God's purposes, my part is often so small, it doesn't even make a ripple. Yet, I found out an odd thing: when I can't affect the outcome, I quit worrying about it! My responsibility is to do what God gives me to do. The outcome is His to worry about, not mine! Freedom! Without responsibility for the outcome, life is lighter, freer.

Note: I am not saying we don't have responsibility, of course we do, and we need to be responsible. What we don't have is any power to bring about a hoped for outcome in another person's life. That is strictly between them and God!

More Bad News:

"Anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted But as for you, continue in what you have learned, " II Tim 3:12-14.

The more you experience God's heart for people, the more you will see what He sees and feel what He feels. And when people reject God, we feel rejected — it hurts, it's disappointing, it is discouraging. There is no way to protect ourselves from this, for it is a fact of life in a fallen world that people bail on God and each other.

Good News:

When we bring our grief, disappointment, anger and disillusionment to God, we learn and are comforted, of course, but also a

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WGA Family and Friends Learn About Family Trauma

An anonymous mother

September 10, 1998, was the day our son seated us at the dining room table, put a box of Kleenex between us and told us that he needed to tell us something. This was the opening scene of our most painful family trauma.

My initial reaction was shock. It was unreal—this must be a nightmare! I want to wake-up! We hugged our son and assured him of our love for him. He said he wanted to have a relationship like ours, only with a man. Tears came, stinging my face. Then came disbelief, confusion; nothing made sense. I cried almost continually for the next five days. I knew of parents who abused their children and of children who didn't even know who their fathers were. They weren't homosexual. Why was my son?

It's been a long and painful journey these past six years. Last June, we (my husband and I) coordinated and attended the first WGA Friends and Family Retreat in Breckenridge. Our speaker was Steven Earle, MA, MS, LPC, LAC.

Fifteen family, friends and WGA staff attended the retreat. It was a time of information gathering, questions and answers and sharing

and comparing our stories. We ate all our meals together and also enjoyed some leisure time and playing games.

Steve's style was informal. He was open about himself, speaking of his youth, his family, his good and harmful decisions and how they affected both him and his family. The topic for the retreat was grief and ministry. Steve opened our eyes to the many facets of grief, including its spiritual purpose; society the church and grief, tragic and compound grief, its individuality and emotions, and how to gently come alongside a person in grief.

We also learned from Steve's teaching on family trauma and loss, and the myriad of emotions of trauma including: anger, inadequacy, loneliness, emotional pain, depression, abandonment and shame. Also covered were the criteria and the range of addictive behaviors and how they often cycle over and over.

Lastly, we were given suggestions on how and when to grieve and signs of grief. I personally received much insight into the whole trauma process from the Christian perspective. Most importantly, I know that I am not

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Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By *Nancy Hicks*

Forgiveness Part II

/ In my previous devotional I discussed the impact of Neil T. Anderson's *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* on my understanding of forgiveness. After addressing the need to accept the consequences of others' sin in our lives, Anderson adds, "Forgiveness is dealing with your pain and leaving the other person to God." In *Moby Dick* -- perhaps the ultimate tale of revenge--Melville writes, "Ah God! What trances of torments does that man endure who is consumed with one unachieved revengeful desire. He sleeps with clenched hands, and wakes with his own bloody nails in his palms." Unforgiveness hurts me--most often much more than it affects the person I haven't forgiven. This concept of forgiveness as being something that I do for myself is radically new. I have often fought forgiving someone because I felt like I was being asked to add insult to injury--not only was I hurt, but now I have to say "it's OK" and pretend to forget it as I

watch them skip away. This new path is much more inviting; I can unclench my own fists and hand my transgressors over to God. My challenge is to believe God when he describes himself as just and compassionate. He cares about the pain that I have experienced. "Vengeance is mine," declares the Lord, 'I will repay.'"

*When I sin
against
someone, I am
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All of this is also giving me a new understanding of sin. When I sin against someone, I am forcing them to carry the painful consequences of my actions. I am forcing them to decide between raging against me and the pain I have inflicted, and accepting that they limp because of me. Either way I have placed a burden on them. But, when someone I have sinned against forgives me and says, "You have hurt me. This will be a difficult obstacle in my life and in our relationship, but let's work at it and move on." I am filled with gratitude. The words "he who is forgiven much, loves much" become true and real in me.

Likewise, the more I work at

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forgiving others, and work through the anger and desire for revenge I have towards them, the more my own aversion to doing the same thing to others can grow. By God's grace, as I limp with my own healed wounds, I will cling more fervently to the mercy of God that helps keep me from sinning against those around me.

And casting even more vision: I believe that by God's grace, when I sacrifice my desire for revenge and my longing for regret, I can come to a place where I grieve the pain that my persecutors have experienced—woundings that have contributed to their lashing out/ or acting out from their own unresolved unforgiveness. I can actually “pray for those who persecute me” and mean it.

One final word of encouragement about being scarred: The beauty of

the river is in its scars. The way that the water cascades over broken trees and fallen boulders; the way it curls around snags of twisted branches and dead leaves; the way it falls with glorious thunder where the ground has given way, is beautiful. A canal holds nothing of the mystery and wonder of a river—nothing of its beauty. A scarred life, undammed by revenge and regret creates a beautiful path for cascading grace.



(Family and Friends...continued from page 3)

going through this process alone. God is my hope and has graciously provided me with the support of fellow Christians who are able to relate to the issues of my trauma and those of my son.

I would highly recommend the upcoming Friends and Family Retreat, April 29-May 30. Steven Earle will again be our speaker and will cover the subject of healing,

specifically how family and friends can be part of the solution.



(What Have I Learned?... continued from page 2)

wonderful thing happens. Throughout all these cycles of loving, truth-telling, grace-dispensing, pouring our hearts out to God—our intimacy with Him grows above and beyond what we could ever have thought, or hoped. We find that Jesus' promise in Matthew 11:25-30 (The Message) is really for us:

Jesus broke into prayer: Thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You've concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that's the way you like to work."

*Jesus resumed talking to the people, but now tenderly, "The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, coming out of Father and Son intimacies and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does; nor the Father the way the Son does. **But I'm not keeping it to myself, I'm ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen.***

Are you tired? Worn Out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

And I have found that this does make it worth it all, NOW, not just in the by and by!

Third Lesson: Living with Grace and Truth as simultaneous priorities has good and bad consequences.

Lesson # 4: Grace and Truth can only be applied in full measure in a community of believers committed to working together to further God's kingdom. Although each of us has the capacity to dispense both truth and grace, our personalities, temperaments and the very gifts God has given us tend to make us (when operating on our own) err in one direction or the other.

There are friends among us who have strong gifts on the truth side of the coin: their grasp of the truth is challenging—intimidating, inspires vision—with their discernment they can intervene when we are heading the wrong direction! Without these friends, we could get off track, away from God's purposes.

There are other friends among us who bring their grace-gifts of encouragement, mercy, support, empathy. Without these friends we would burn out; our battle-weary hearts would give out.

The challenge for each of these friends (the truth-protector who struggles to dispense grace and the grace-dispenser who may have to work hard to speak the truth) is to use our gifts without compromising or invalidating the others. The temptation is to see the other as the enemy—our real enemy would love for us to believe that.

Fourth lesson: Grace and Truth can only be applied in full measure in a community of believers committed to

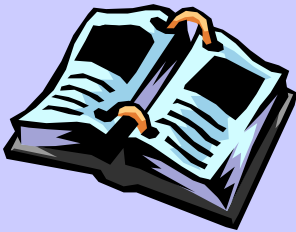
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(What Have I Learned?... *continued from page 6*)
working together to further God's kingdom.

Lesson # 5: Grace and Truth are power tools in the Body of Christ. We must pray together and learn how to apply them in our relationships with one another. We must then allow the Holy Spirit to minister truth and grace outside our walls to the world that is desperate for a taste of the redemptive power of grace and truth in their own lives.

Fifth Lesson: Grace and Truth are power tools in the Body of Christ; if we want to be effective in God's purposes, we must become skillful in their use.

Conclusion: I am hoping and praying that my experiences and some of the lessons I have learned will inspire and encourage others in their own growth in grace and truth. May the Lord guide us into all truth!



Upcoming Events

Family & Friends Retreat

April 29th - May 1st

WGA will be hosting a retreat for family and friends in the spring. Mark the date on your calendars. More information will be available soon. If you are interested in attending, please contact the WGA office at 303-863-7757 or email us at info@wheregraceabounds.org.

Sexuality and the Church 2005

Featuring Joe Dallas

The morning of May 6th

This event is structured for people who wish to learn more about how to minister to those struggling with sexual and relational issues. Make it a point to invite your pastor! Brochures are available from the WGA office (303-863-7757, info@wheregraceabounds.org).

Redeemed Sexuality

Featuring Joe Dallas

May 6-7th

This seminar will address issues of sexuality and relational brokenness and is open to everyone! Contact the WGA office for a brochure at 303-863-7757 or info@wheregraceabounds.org.

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MARCH)))

Thursday Night Group

March 3rd - 41 people
 March 10th - 36 people
 March 17th - 35 people
 March 24th - 27 people
 March 31st - 48 people
 Orientation meeting - 8 new people

Discipleship Counseling and Mentoring

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

March 5 - Intercessory Prayer at the WGA offices

March 12th - WGA Activity, the Amazing Race at the Zoo.

March 27th - Easter

APRIL & BEYOND

April 15-16th - Participating in Impact America at Cherry Hills Community Church

April 22-23rd - WGA Art & Faith Weekend. Contact Scott at the WGA office for more info.

April 29 - May 1st - Family and Friends Retreat.

May 6th - Sexuality and the Church, an educational seminar for pastors and ministry leaders, with special speaker Joe Dallas.

May 6-7 - Redeemed Sexuality Seminar, with special speaker Joe Dallas.

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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.



A Measure of Grace
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