



# A Measure of *Grace*

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## Imagine: for Good not for Evil

*By Mary Heathman*

*(adapted from a previous newsletter article)*

*P*s I considered the “Lessons Learned” focus of the past two months, I surfed through the newsletter archives, looking for threads of repetitive themes. As I browsed, one topic surfaced that is also a frequent focal point in our discipleship counseling and small group discussions. It seems that the power of the mind—specifically the power to imagine—is of constant concern to our group members.

One newsletter article from June of 2002 is a composite of lessons I have learned about God’s intent for our ability to imagine. It also illustrates my understanding of how we can cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the appropriate use of our imagination. I have prepared a composite/rewrite of that article:



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For years now, it has been my firm belief that, as Andrew Murray often said, we are always “in the school of the Spirit.”

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

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

email: [Wwga@aol.com](mailto:Wwga@aol.com)  
[www.wheregraceabounds.org](http://www.wheregraceabounds.org)

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I understand Murray's term to mean that every relationship, circumstance, trial, joy, emotion, thought, dream . . . is raw material that God will not waste, but uses to teach us. It is also my belief that we can learn to cooperate with God in this process. We can become better students, if we apply ourselves to the task. The power of our imagination is well within God's sphere of influence to use for good.

The dictionary defines imagination as *"the act, or power, of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never wholly perceived in reality."*

All human beings have the power to form a mental image, to create in our minds a picture of something that is not currently at hand, or even to conceive of something that does not exist except in our own minds. Remembering events, even thoughts or impressions from our past is a function of our imagination. When we call forth memories, when we form a picture in our minds from the past, we are using the power of our imagination.

Powerful memories can be triggered without our conscious cooperation. We can also choose which memories to call forth.



M o r e  
importantly,  
in either case,  
we c a n  
choose h o w

to respond to them.

For example, in 1985 I had a dramatic experience with God that I recognized then and now as a definite call to ministry. Since then, all I have to do to address any doubts I have about whether I have a place or purpose in the building of His kingdom is to consciously remember that time in San Francisco, in June of 1985. I picture myself on the boat in the middle of the bay, remembering the sun, the way the boat rolled from side to side on the waves and the breeze pulling at my hair. I remember the person I was with and the way I was feeling. I can hear again His words and feel again the thrill of hearing Him speak so specifically that I could not mistake His direction. **And every time I remember, really dwell on and relive, that encounter, I experience my call to ministry all over again.**

My past includes other experiences that are also intense – sinful encounters, the active memories of which have largely faded away. Yet occasionally, something triggers those memories. I may catch a whiff of a familiar after-shave or hear a popular song from times past that will bring sudden and powerful pictures to my mind. Or sometimes I am simply lonely, feeling empty, and into the void rush vivid memories of how I used to fill those needs. **And every time I remember, if I really dwell on and relive, those**

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## Pornography and Internet Statistics

### *From the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families*

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- Approximately 40 million people in the United States are sexually involved with the Internet  
*Exposing Porn: Science, Religion, and the New Addiction*, Paul Strand. Christian Broadcasting Network, 2004.
- One in five children ages 10-17 have received a sexual solicitation over the Internet  
*The Web's Dark Secret*. Newsweek, 19 March, 2001.
- Three million of the visitors to adult websites in September 2000 were age 17 or younger  
*NetValue Report on Minors Online*. Business Wire, 19 December, 2000.
- One in four children who use the Internet are exposed to unwanted sexual material  
*Your Children & Pornography: A guide for Parents*, Tom Buford. Tommera Press, 2001.
- 2.5 billion emails per day are pornographic  
*Pornography Statistics 2003*. Family Safe Media. [www.familysafemedia.com](http://www.familysafemedia.com), 2003.
- 25 percent of all search engine requests are pornography related  
*Internet Pornography Statistics: 2003*, David C. Bissette, Psy.D. [www.healthymind.com](http://www.healthymind.com), 2004.
- Sex sites on the Web generate at least \$1 billion per year in revenue  
*Wall Street Meets Pornography*. New York Times, 23 October, 2000.
- 72 million Internet users visit pornography web sites per year  
*Pornography Statistics 2003*. Internet Filter Review. [www.internetfilterreview.com](http://www.internetfilterreview.com), 2003.
- 94 percent of Americans believe a ban on Internet pornography should be legal  
*Statistics on Internet Pornography*. [www.levelbest.com](http://www.levelbest.com).
- 79 percent of Americans say the government should do something about the potential for dangerous strangers to make contact with children  
*Survey Shows Widespread Enthusiasm for High Technology*. NPR Online. <http://www.npr.org/programs/specials/poll/technology/>, 1999.
- One in 17 children ages 10-17 were threatened or harassed over the Internet in 2000  
*Report Statistical Highlights*. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, Crimes Against Children, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000.

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# Reflections:

## Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By *Patrick Maschka*

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*How long, O Lord, how long?*

*(Psalm 6:3)*

Waiting is not one of my strengths. It doesn't help, of course, that I rarely feel encouraged to wait for much. On the contrary, television and newspaper advertisements provide a daily onslaught of reasons not to wait, and products to prove that waiting is something that nobody needs to do. I can recall as a child mailing in several cereal box tops and an order form with coins taped to it, then waiting an eternal 6-8 weeks for my prized plastic toy to arrive in the mail (I'm dating myself). These days, all a kid has to do is go to a web site, click OVERNIGHT and they've got what they want in 24 hours or less. So much waiting has been eliminated, and I think we are getting so used to it, that our tolerance for it is becoming less and less.

I want to address two of what I consider faulty beliefs that come to mind with regards to waiting. First: waiting is not good for us. Somehow, we have learned that if we feel impatient from waiting, something might be wrong. If you wait, you may not feel valued as a person ("I emailed him 16 minutes

ago, why hasn't he responded?"). Consider how waiting can prepare us and calm us; that waiting is harmful is simply untrue. Living with the expectation of immediate gratification all of the time cheats us out of meaningful experiences. Now that's not good for us.

Second: not having to wait for something increases our satisfaction. The old adage "good things come to him who waits" is not something people want to hear any more. Quick thrills, though, have increased our desires for more thrills, and slowly we've become people who really can't be satisfied. Addictions run rampant in our society because it's too easy to get what we want faster than ever thought possible. A deep satisfaction can come from waiting for something good. Like my toy in the mail, the waiting made the prize so much better, so much more meaningful.

While it is no easy task to accept waiting, let alone embrace it, when we cry out our weary "How long, O Lord?" God promises that "blessed are all who wait for him" (Isaiah 30:18). Our Lord sets an example by waiting our whole lives before he open his arms to us as we enter his heavenly kingdom. Apparently, to him we are worth the wait.



(Porn/Internet Statistics... continued from page 3)

- For every 10 men in church, 5 are struggling with pornography *The Call to Biblical Manhood*. Man in the Mirror, 6 July, 2004.
  - Americans spend \$10 billion per year on pornography *Overdosing on Porn*, Rebecca Hagelin. www.worldandi.com, March, 2004.
  - There are 800 million rentals each year of adult videos and DVDs *Overdosing on Porn*, Rebecca Hagelin. www.worldandi.com, March, 2004.
  - 11,000 adult movies are produced each year *Overdosing on Porn*, Rebecca Hagelin. www.worldandi.com, March, 2004.
  - 34 percent of churchgoing women said they have intentionally visited porn websites online *Internet porn a guy thing? Not really, online rating service says*, Mark O'Keefe. The Charlotte Observer.
  - Less than 10% of sexual solicitations and only 3% of unwanted exposure on the Internet were reported to authorities *Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth*. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, Crimes Against Children, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000.
  - More than 30% of 1,500 surveyed companies have terminated employees for inappropriate use of the Internet, while only 37.5% of companies use filtering software Websense Incorporated and The Center for Internet Studies, 2000.
  - 39 million homes receive the adult channels in scrambled form, while the number of children with potential exposure to such images is about 29 million *Court looks at adult channel 'bleed'*, Michael Kirkland. UPF Financial Wire, 30 November, 1999.
  - Cable companies brought in revenue of \$177 million from sexually explicit pay-per-view programming *No Big Surge in Sex Programs is Expected From Cable Ruling*, Jim Rutenberg. The New York Times, 24 May, 2000.
  - Legal Facts. Vol. 2, No. 3, 2000.
  - 21 percent of teens say they have looked at something on the Internet that they wouldn't want their parents to know *A World of Their Own*. Newsweek, 8 May 2000.
  - Out of 81 pastors surveyed (74 males 7 female), 98% were exposed to porn; 43% intentionally accessed a sexually explicit website National Coalition survey of pastors. Seattle. April 2000.
- These statistics were taken from the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families website, <http://www.nationalcoalition.org/resourceesservices/stat.html>.*



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**encounters, it is possible to experience my sin all over again.**

Did you notice that I said, “*if I really dwell on and relive those encounters, it is possible to experience them all over again?*” I may not have control over what comes charging to the front of my mind, but I do have a choice about what to do with it – to dwell upon or dismiss it.

I have exercised this choice countless times a day for thirty years now. In 1972, when I first came to Christ, I decided I never again wanted to dwell on anything that wasn’t true, honest, and good. Though not yet having reached perfection in this endeavor, from that day to this I have purposed to make it a habit to dwell upon, or cling to, the things of God, and run from even the appearance of evil. This probably sounds familiar to readers intimate with God’s word. These scriptural concepts have been seared into my heart and mind from the day I first believed. I will quote the scriptures, in the words of Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*:

*Summing it all up, friends, I’d say you’ll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Philippians 4:8*

*Love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it. Run for dear life*

*from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Romans 12:9*

The scriptures are clear. The logic is impeccable. Why, then, don’t I **always** obey? Why, indeed?

Well, there is the matter of our sin nature. “*The good I want to do, I don’t do. The bad I don’t want to do, I do anyway. . .*” as the Apostle Paul put it (in Romans 7). It is part of the human condition to wrestle with the gap between what we know of the law and what we obey. To address our disobedience, we must live a life of repentance, constantly returning to the Lord with our sin, confessing, and praying that He would change our hearts.

But sin isn’t the only force at work in the process of mind renewal. God wants to teach us about ourselves, about Him, and about others. In the “school of the Spirit,” the Lord teaches us about why certain temptations have holds on us and what the roots of our needs are. If we take our memories to Him, he will instruct us.

For example, when I was just learning about how God wanted to help me “take every thought captive” and to “renew my mind,” I became aware of a pattern in my run-a-way thoughts. It seemed that my most frequent and favorite day-dreams consisted of someone finding me in an impossible situation and simply lifting me up and out of it. To this

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day, something inside me still stirs with yearning at scenes like that found toward the end of *An Officer and a Gentlemen*, where the hero marches into a factory, swoops up his lady-in-waiting and carries her out of a life of drudgery and into a happy-ever-after life. (I almost thrill to the thought as I sit here at the solitary task of writing! Maybe the door will burst open, and my knight in shining armor will wave his magic wand over the computer, the article will write itself and I will be swept off in his arms for a life of. . . . What? They never tell you!)

Well, anyway, as I brought my thought-patterns to God and asked Him about them, He showed me how I was continually seeking/yearning for someone to take care of me—someone other than Him! Not a pleasant truth to face, but one that freed me up when I faced it and repented, turning to the Lord in the midst of it. Then He revealed more truth to me. Again Peterson's *The Message* reads:

*Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything—and I do mean everything—connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you. Eph 4:23-24.*

And He enabled (and is continuing to enable) me to let the old pass away, not in my own strength, but the power of His Spirit:

*Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Romans 8:5-6*

I have learned over 20 years of ministry that God not only helps us to obey Him, He also wants to redeem that which was corrupted. He gave us our ability to use our imaginations—a reflection of Him in us, created beings made in His image and thus with the ability to create images in our minds. He will not settle for that for which most of us are willing to settle—not sinning with our imaginations. He wants to restore us to His original intent—that we will be co-creators with Him, our imaginations harnessed for good and holy work in the building of His kingdom on earth!

The open, spacious, free life is one in which our imagination is under the control of the Holy Spirit, free to season our lives and relationships. May we continue to cooperate with Him as He works with us. ✠

# APRIL

## Thursday Night Group

April 7th - 44 people  
 April 14th - 41 people  
 April 21st - 29 people  
 April 28th - 36 people  
 Commitment Group & Survivors of Abuse  
 have a combined total of 17 participants  
 meeting on Wednesday Nights.

## Discipleship Counseling and Mentoring

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

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

April 22-23rd - WGA Art &  
 Faith Weekend. About 25  
 people were in attendance.

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

# MAY & BEYOND

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.

May 7th - Intercessory Prayer.

June 26th - July 1st - Pastoral Care  
 Ministry conference in Wheaton, IL,  
 with Leanne Payne

July 19-23rd - Exodus International  
 Conference in Asheville, NC.

## WGA Staff

Mary Heathman  
 Executive Director

### Program Department

Scott Kingry

Program Director

Pat Bott

Assistant Program Director

### Operations Department

Roger Jones

Operations Director

Sheila Knudtsen

Resource Development

## 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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