



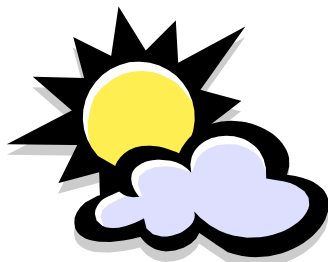
A Measure of *Grace*

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Seasons Change

by Mary Heathman



As a child living on a military base in the Panama Canal Zone, I remember two seasons—*rainy* and *more-rainy*. The adults used to complain a lot, their plans for the weekend often ruined because they could never get through eighteen holes of golf without being caught in a downpour. They would commiserate with one another in the clubhouse.

We kids didn't waste time complaining. In the *rainy* season, the clay baseball field dried faster, so we would simply run for the tin-roofed shelters and wait out a storm, knowing that in a few minutes, the sun would appear, the steam would rise from the mud, and before long, the field was dry enough to play ball on. In the *more-rainy* season, we knew we might as well forget the ballgame and bring out the jacks, because that clay was going to be mud for days!

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I'm grown up now, and I have spent many an hour

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with the adults commiserating “in the clubhouse” over ruined plans, our disappointment eating up the opportunities of the moment. Finally, five decades later, I find myself returning to the simple wisdom of my childhood. I know again what I once knew as a child—that seasons will change, and it’s better to look around for what else we can do, than to complain about it and miss out on the fun entirely.

In Ray Boltz’s song, “Seasons Change,” he sings of a farmer who stands in his field “crying out for rain” but “his crops are almost gone” and no rain comes. The lyricist goes on to wonder how “men like this survive, but he’s been here for years.” The inference is that the farmer survives because he knows that the seasons will change. The last verse and the chorus of the song say that the hearer may also survive, because:

*“Hearts grown cold
May be warmed by the summer sun
Dreams you hold
May be closer than you know
Let the Seasons change
Barren fields will bloom again
Seasons change
Gentle rains will fall
Seasons change
Better days will come and then
You will find the blessing
Is worth the pain”
So just believe
And let the seasons change.”*

Learning to “just believe and let the

seasons change” is no easy undertaking. The journey is difficult, but to paraphrase Robert Frost, “Take the road less traveled by, and it will make all the difference.”

I find myself in a season of wondering what keeps me and other travelers marching forward on the more difficult terrain of the road less traveled. (The “road less traveled” is otherwise known to many of us as “the healing journey.”) I wonder how people survive the losses they suffer along the way. How have I survived so far? What does it take to keep on keeping on when everything in you just wants to retreat?

A number of years ago, I was listening to a young man’s story over the phone. “Spencer” was suicidal, he had called in to talk. As I was listening, I was trying to find some ray of hope that I could reflect back to him, and begin pointing out to him a reason to go on living. But as his story unfolded, Spencer told of one horrendous loss after another. All of his relationships were either ruined or in the process of ruining him; his job was a dead-end that gave him no satisfaction. When we began to wrap up the call, I had nothing to offer him. In fact, I was in despair myself over his circumstances. I remember thinking, with a desperate sadness, “Well, it doesn’t seem as if there is any way out for him.” But I offered what I could—we set a time for another call.

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WGA Building Update *by Roger Jones*

purchased a place for WGA to call home. It has been almost seven years since we purchased the property at 1532 Emerson Street.

The “Gargoyle House,” as it is referred to by the Colorado Historical Society, was built in 1889. Its architect was William Lang, who also designed the Molly Brown House here in Denver. The building has historical significance and is listed as a historical landmark, which makes the building eligible for repair/restoration funds through the state of Colorado.

In 2004, we received a grant to do some repair work, primarily to the roof and exterior stair, located at the back of the building. At the time of applying for the grant, our projected expenses were somewhere around \$133,000. Our grant was for 75% of that and we needed to come up with the remaining 25% of the funds. Our investment in our building had increased dramatically, and we were able to come up with our 25% through our equity, rather than through more fundraising. The project was a worthy endeavor, as the much needed repairs would result in yet more of an increase in our property’s value and a further

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 many of you are aware, WGA purchased a historic office building in 1998. At the time of purchase, WGA was faced with the daunting task of finding an office space for 6 staff. Previously, our office space had been either donated or offered to us at very reduced rates. But, we had grown over the years. We were unable to locate donated space in the quantity required. After doing some research on what was available to us for rent, we realized that we could buy something for about the same cost each month as renting. So, we took the plunge and

Reflections:

Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By *Patrick Maschka*

They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways (Judges 2:19).

Sometimes, despite all encouragement, despite all warnings, despite all wisdom I may have, I am determined to sin. I try to get around it by convincing myself that I just can't persevere any longer; I am tired and if I just had my pleasurable sin of choice, I could get on with my life and be a holy man of God again. I simply must have my sin to have some peace, so it would be best just to get it over with. While I'm at it, I might as well knock off as many sins as possible or at least make it one good, big sin. Then I won't want it any more and I can move on and start out fresh.

The history of the Israelites is typified by their pattern of following and forsaking God repeatedly. If he is anything, God is patient with his ignorant creations! How like the Israelites I am -- living in peace until temptation tires me or I need some excitement, choosing sin for a while, then finding futility there and returning to the Lord. Sometimes, this pattern can replay within a few hours or even minutes in the world of my thoughts.

Although it's impossible for us to have the perspective of our loving creator, if we try, we can glimpse how he views us. Quite simply, God knows that we, his imperfect children, will sin. We must agree with Paul and the psalmist, "there is no one who does good, not even one" (Rom 3:12). This is a hard reality to grasp, because I want to believe that God expects good things from me so he will be pleased. The truth is, he will be pleased when I am obedient and faithful, but he is never surprised when I sin. How, then, am I lovable to him? I am lovable because I am his own, just as I am, not as I do. I may be determined to sin, but the Lord God is far more determined to love me and mold me into the person he intended me to be.

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more (Rom 5:20).



(Building... continued from page 3)

investment in the future of WGA.

The process of applying for a grant all the way to the completion of a project can take years. This project is no exception. Since we originally pulled together figures for our project until now has been approximately two and a half years. Costs have increased (primarily due to steel) over that time and we are now facing a project with a realistic budget of somewhere between \$170,000 to \$199,000, an increase of up to \$66,000.

Currently, we are in the process of updating bids and trying to save whatever we can on expenses, while adhering to the strict guidelines for restoring and repairing a historic building using monies from the State Historical Fund. Please pray for wisdom for us in our decision making process. We have a year left to complete the project, which seems like a long time, but will go very quickly!

Finally, the gargoyle (Gracie) which gives our offices its name the "Gargoyle House," was stolen from our third floor rooftop in early May. We offered a reward for her return (maybe you saw me on the news or read about it in the *Denver Post*), and amazingly, she came home (a story too long for this article). In addition to our other building projects, we need to find a way to restore Gracie to her original position and ensure

that she is not taken again.

Please pray for these projects and for those of us involved. While we love our offices and are thankful for all that God has provided the ministry, we are obviously not in the "business" of restoring historic buildings. Our resources of time and money are limited and there is plenty for the staff of WGA to manage without the task of a major building repair project.

If you would like to contribute towards WGA's expenses for these projects, please designate your gift as such using the provided envelope. Like all other donations you make to WGA, monies given towards this project are tax-deductible.



(Seasons... continued from page 2)

Over the years, the seasons have changed for Spencer. He was offered a job that utilized his skills and paid a decent salary. One of his most destructive relationships ended. I hear from him from time to time. He still has a hard and mostly joyless life, but he is not as often suicidal as he used to be. I think of him as I wonder about how to survive when the season is dark, and there is no light in sight. What made him resist doing away with himself, and wait instead for the season to change? What keeps him going while he waits?

Indeed, what has kept me from quitting when times seem the hardest and the path is the darkest? When I compare the stories of folks like Spencer with my own journey, I come up with some familiar stepping stones along the road less traveled. I will share a few of them with our readers, hoping that these thoughts will make your journey a little less hard and less lonely.

(Parenthetical Note: There are, of course, spiritual disciplines, like prayer and bible study that feed us along our way. If we are Christians, there is the fruit of the Spirit alive and active in us, among them patience and long-suffering, that seem to supernaturally take over when we allow them. We also need

to make it a habit to interpret life through an eternal perspective that forms in us as we renew our minds with the Truth. And we must lead balanced lives with the everyday rhythms of work and rest. All these things are vital, even essential, in our walk with the Lord.)

In addition to the above noted basics, there are a few specific stepping stones I would like to mention that are also recognizable in the lives of survivors I have known. It seems they all have in common: Meticulous Honesty, Emotional Presence, and a Gift for Celebration.

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Meticulous Honesty: In my conversations with Spencer, one of the things that is always true is that he will not allow himself one shred of illusion—about himself or about his circumstances and relationships. As I think about that, I remember

an Alcoholics Anonymous adage, “You are only as sick as your secrets.” I thoroughly agree! I am convinced that there will be no lasting change for good in our lives until we have become truth tellers. As former staff member, Karen Wood, wrote in her booklet, Emotional Honesty, “One of the major challenges we face in entering into what God has for us is to be honest with ourselves. In doing so, we begin the process of moving out

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of the lies we have embraced into the truth of who God made us to be."

Emotional Presence: Where meticulous honesty is the first step, we find almost immediately upon committing to telling the truth that our emotions come charging forward. In fact, we find that the reason we have been hiding, or lying, has been to avoid the painful emotions of our past and/or present lives. The next stepping stone along the road to healing, "the road less traveled by," is to be emotionally present—to ourselves, God, and a person or two who love and support us. Initially, this other person could be a counselor, but at some point along the way, our emotional presence must find its way into our relationships at large. Emotional presence opens the door to intimacy—a basic need we ignore at our peril. (Biblical examples: Ps 31:19, 119:28, Ec 1:18)

Gift for Celebration: I admit that there are many on the journey who are masters at celebration, while I am simply a novice. These folks never miss an opportunity to acknowledge a friend's birthday, or note a milestone and celebrate progress. Those of us whose pattern is to keep our noses to the proverbial grindstone, may look up from time to time and hear the hilarity coming from the party room, and think, "Where did everybody go?" "I wonder what's happening?" If we are to survive the long haul, we will

take their lead periodically, put down the tools of our trade, take up the party hat and noisemakers and celebrate with our brothers and sisters who know how important this is. We cannot sustain our journey without the soul food of celebration. (Biblical examples in Ex 23:14, Ne 8:12, Lu 15:23)

Conclusion: Did you notice that all three of the stepping stones I described cannot be taken alone? Honesty doesn't become healing until you are telling the truth—to yourself, God and a few other people. Emotional presence requires someone(s) to whom we can express our hopes and fears, to confess our sins and receive forgiveness. Celebration is hollow unless we are with others who share our joy and add their enthusiasm to our own.

We are designed to live in community with men and women who will walk with us and let us walk with them. On the healing journey, as in walking with Christ, we are all aliens in a strange land, and we need each other to remind us who we are and where we are going. It is my hope and prayer that we will become meticulously honest with ourselves, God and a few close companions, and grow to be emotionally present in all our relationships. And may we all look for ways to celebrate one another and our Lord who celebrates us!



))) **MAY**)))

Thursday Night Group

May 5th - 49 people
May 12th - 44 people
May 19th - 45 people
May 26th - No Group

Orientation Meeting - There were 4 new people in attendance.

Discipleship Counseling and Mentoring

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

May 6th - Sexuality and the Church, an educational seminar for pastors and ministry leaders, with special speaker Joe Dallas. Approx. 65 Pastors/Leaders were in attendance.

May 6-7 - Redeemed Sexuality Seminar, with special speaker Joe Dallas. Approx. 75 people attended.

JUNE & BEYOND

June 3 - 5th - Mary Heathman presenting at Open Door Church Women's retreat in San Rafael, CA.

June 4th - 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.

August 27th - Participating in carnival sponsored by Trinity Presbyterian Church.

September 24-25th - Participating in Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church Missions Banquet.

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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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