



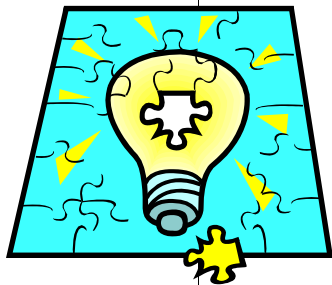
A Measure of Grace

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Thoughts on Sharing Christ *by Mary Heathman*

In *What to Say At a Naked Party*, Frederica Matthews-Green describes three common strategies that **don't** work to check sexual "liberation." Her thoughts so closely mirror WGA's position on the issues, we reprinted her article on page 3 of this publication.



As I thought what I might write in my own article, it occurs to me that the same strategies that don't work to check sexual "liberation," also don't work in ministry in general. In fact, in the most core mission of the church, to "go and make disciples of all nations," it seems God's people are finding miserable results!

Case in point: This past Sunday was the gay pride parade in downtown Denver. Reports have come in describing the

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efforts of professing Christians to witness to the parade participants and their audience. One small group stood in the midst of the crowd carrying signs, that read, "Diversity is Perversity." They appeared to be just standing there, content to let their sign be the only message they offered—"judgment without mercy", as one observed.

Another group distributed pamphlets along the parade route and in the surrounding neighborhood and park. The front of the tri-fold said on the outside, "God Loves You," while the message on the inside mixed biblical references with psychological theory, and words of warning and exhortation bordering on condemnation, for people who practice homosexual acts—acts which were listed specifically.

And if the reader wanted more information, he or she could call—**not** the creator of the brochure, **not** the organization, church or individuals who distributed it—but a number of organizations that the writers listed as a follow up resource.



Without our knowledge, permission, or any input from us as to the content, Where Grace A b o u n d s appeared first on the list of

referrals, complete with our phone number, PO Box and website address.

The first thing we had to deal with this morning were several irate phone messages responding to an apparent WGA publicity campaign littering their park and neighborhood. I called them back, spoke to one and left messages with the others explaining what had happened, and our regret that our ministry was introduced to them in such an off-putting way. A WGA intern prepared and posted a message for us on our website to explain in case folks were going there to check us out.

Now, I am fairly certain that the anonymous writers and distributors were not intending to be offensive. With the beginning, "God Loves You," and inclusion of current theories of the origin of homosexuality, I could tell the intent was to offer an alternative view to the messages put forth by gay activism.

But well-intended though it may have been, the project did not seem to help anyone, least of all us. Instead it resulted in distress as we listened to abusive messages, dealt with our confusion about what had happened and had to prepare and deliver a response. I also believe some of the content of the literature and its tone and method of distribution will serve to push more

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What to Say at a Naked Party

Three common strategies to check sexual 'liberation' no longer work

by Frederica Mathewes-Green

*This article first appeared in the February 2005 issue of **Christianity Today**. Used by permission of Christianity Today International, Carol Stream, IL 60188.*

Anyone who's been on a college campus lately will confirm the depressing report delivered by Vigen Guroian in his essay, **Dorm Brothel:** *The new debauchery, and the colleges that let it happen*, in *Christianity Today*, February 2005. As someone who does a lot of campus speaking, I've seen my fair share of posters announcing sex-toy workshops, transgender celebrations, and, on one Ivy League campus, an open invitation to a "naked party." What's a naked party? Anybody who wants can attend, but you have to take off all your clothes to stay.

It makes you want to weep for the children, for girls in particular, who deserve to be protected from this carnival of leering and molestation. Guroian hits the target in his demand that colleges do more to provide such protection. But what about the students themselves? How can we help them resist this expectation?

There are three typical strategies, and I don't think any of them works. The first is practical: We tell students to abstain because immorality leads to misery. But the libertines in the audience don't see evidence that this is so; they're having fun, for the most part, and it doesn't look like anyone is harmed. The second is romantic: We tell students that marriage is glorious. Once again, they don't see a lot of evidence of that, not in the lives of married people they know, perhaps especially in the lives of their parents. What they saw at the breakfast table for the last 18 years doesn't look that great, and what they did last night didn't feel that bad.

The third is our foundational premise that it's a matter of "objective morality." We regularly complain that young people have no absolute values; that, in Guroian's words, "There is no right and wrong." But this message is likely to strike hearers as irrelevant, speculative, and quaint. Not only that, but flat-out wrong. These students have an objective morality. It's just different from ours. They believe that it's objectively wrong to dump someone in a callous way. It's wrong to have sex with someone who isn't willing. It's wrong to transgress any one of a hundred subtle etiquette cues about

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Reflections:

Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

Who shall separate us from the love Christ?

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or
nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Or death of children, friends, parents, spouses, loved ones,
or cancer

or bankruptcy

or too much money

Or divorce

Or unfaithfulness

Or abortion

or time in prison or the psych unit or foster care

Or addictions to drugs, pornography, alcohol, food, shopping,
cutting,

abusive relationships, sex

or busy-ness

or fearfulness, depression, loneliness

or confusion?

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor
principalities, not things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to
separate us from the love of God,
which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“But (we) say ‘The Lord has forsaken me, and the Lord has
forgotten me.’

(God says) Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no
compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but
I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of
My hands.”

(Romans 8: 35, 38, 39 plus some; Isaiah 49:14-16)

(Naked Party... continued from page 3)

who may sleep with whom under what circumstances. There is plenty of objective morality on their side, and they think it's better than ours. As far as they can see, theirs is working and ours looks pointlessly difficult. Why should they switch? This argument sounds like nothing more than "because I said so."

What we really mean, of course, is "because God said so." And indeed persevering in chastity is so difficult that no other motive except self-abandoning love of God is sufficient. All the warnings about the dangers of promiscuity, all the vaunted bliss of marriage, can be irrefutably countered by somebody's experience. Doing the right thing is not guaranteed to make you happy, and the wicked sometimes thrive. But because the love of God constrains us, because our bodies are not our own but bought with a price, we persevere in a difficult path, pressing on toward the light ahead.

Now, this is a difficult sell to people who don't believe in God. For them, this is like a shiny new car with no engine. If you don't have the motive of love for God, passion for purity looks like an empty shell.

I believe that the only conversation that will currently make sense begins with faith in God. The best we can do is speak passionately about our own experience—our own transformative contact with God, and how it has reordered actions and relationships, and empowered ever-greater deeds and greater love. It's not a bad story, actually, and authentic passion

connects with an audience in a way that theoretical propositions cannot.

I say "currently" because I think there is long-term hope. Look at *It Happened One Night*. While that excellent film exhibits good sexual morality, it also displays behavior we consider unacceptable today: drunkenness, smoking, threats to "sock" the female star. Hollywood wouldn't include such elements today, because the culture changed. It got better. Bad behavior hurts, and eventually this becomes undeniable. Chastity has been such a fixture of human history that the current situation is wildly anomalous, and I expect it will eventually right itself, probably due to women realizing that promiscuity doesn't make them feel empowered, but endangered. It may even turn out, in a supreme irony, that the current phenomenon of transitory student lesbianism was just a strategy of desperation, the only way society currently allows young women to tell boys, "Go away, I'm not ready."

"God hates sin," some emphasize. But God hates sin like the parent of a leukemia victim hates cancer. God really does love the sinner. In order to reach the sinner we will have to love them, too, and offer ourselves humbly and authentically as examples of what God's power can do.

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Frederica Mathewes-Green is author of Gender: Men, Women, Sex, and Feminism (Conciliar, 2002).

(Thoughts... continued from page 2)

people away from God than it will draw them to Him.

In my experience, telling people that their immoral behavior will destroy them doesn't usually motivate them to clean up their act. There are exceptions, of course, but most of the time, such a message either stirs up wrath or causes the hearer to question the intelligence of the deliverer.

WGA program director, Scott Kingry tells of a time when a friend of his said she didn't want to be gay. He responded with incredulity, "Well, just what else can you be?" His belief system didn't allow for any other reality. And this remained so, until someone came alongside him, wanting to get to know him, representing God's interest in him.

Then and only then was he open to hear that there may be another way to live.

There is another reason I know that the distribution of this pamphlet can't have the desired effect. Sexual brokenness is rooted in relational brokenness. So, a message completely disconnected from any human being, and a negative message at that, simply brings more emotional and relational pain into a person's life—a life often already

marked with difficulty and distress.

I can't tell you how many times I have heard during group sharing, how a man or a woman went to a friend for help, or even to a church leader, and was given a book, a quick prayer, and expected to never bring it up again. "Why don't they want to listen to me, or hang with me? I just want to know someone cares enough to listen."

Picking up a pamphlet in the park, or off the windshield wiper of your car is an even more impersonal message. When the need is interpersonal connection as an antidote to interpersonal confusion and pain, the pamphlet just gives the recipient a familiar message, "I don't want to see you or talk with you; you are not worth my personal presence." And then the message says, "But God loves you. Go and be at peace with Him." It's no wonder people balk at such "witnessing."

I remember an experience when I was in personal distress and wondering if God might be real after all. It was the end of the sixties, early seventies. My job was going great, but my personal relationships were a mess. I had put my kids through a divorce and remarriage, and planted them in a blended family

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with four new step-brothers and a step-father who soon turned on them. I knew I had made a big mistake and didn't know how to fix it. I knew I needed help.

I turned to one of the women at work who had been talking about Jesus. I asked her why she believed what she believed. She told me that if I had to ask that question, I just wasn't ready. For the next few months, every time I approached her work area, she gave me a disapproving look, and sometimes commented on how my behavior displeased God. My response was to avoid her—and God—for another year. It isn't her fault I was afraid and proud and chose wrongly to back off. But I do believe that her “witnessing” was part of my problem, certainly not part of the solution for me.

I saw a poster one time that said across the top, “The truth will set you free.” The picture under this heading was of an old wringer washer with a Raggedy Ann doll stuck halfway through the rollers. Any of us who ever got our fingers caught putting clothes through the wringer, remembers bruised finger tips and a subsequent healthy respect for the dangers involved in doing laundry! Underneath the picture was another statement, “But first, it will make you miserable.”

I know that the truth is needed to set a sinner free—and truth must never be compromised. But I also know

that “first the truth will make us miserable.” And what is needed is a few folks to bear that misery with us—people will despair without the graceful presence of God people to encourage and sustain them.

It is my constant prayer that WGA staff and leaders will be what Chuck Swindoll calls “grace dispensers” in the midst of so much “dys-grace” in the lives of men and women who struggle with sexual sin. In the aftermath of this weekend's “witnessing” project, I extend that prayer to the greater Body of Christ, that we will pray the Lord will bring truth into the lives of those who need Him, and that we will recognize the privilege it is to extend His kindness that will lead people to repentance.

May it be so, Lord Jesus... and come soon, if you please!

)))

JUNE

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Thursday Night Group

June 2nd - 46 people
 June 9th - 38 people
 June 16th - 39 people
 June 23rd - 50 people
 June 30th - 51 people
 Orientation Meeting - There were 4 new people in attendance.

Discipleship Counseling and Mentoring

The WGA staff provided about 10 hours of discipleship counseling and mentoring each week last month.

June 3 - 5th - Mary Heathman presented 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 & BEYOND

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

July 30th - WGA Leadership Meeting

August 6th - Intercessory Prayer

August 21st - Presenting at Lakewood Christian Fellowship

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

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

WGA Staff

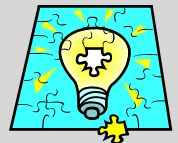
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Purpose Statement

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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 Elodie Ballantine Emig.

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