

## August At a Glance

**August 6th: Intercessory Prayer Meeting**

**August 21st: Presented at Lakewood  
Christian Fellowship**

### Thursday Night Group

**August 4th: 49 people**

**August 11th: 48 people**

**August 18th: 55 people**

**August 25th: 49 people**

**Orientation meeting: 7 new  
people**

## September And Beyond

**September 2nd Exodus Regional Leaders Meeting**

**September 24th–25th: Participating in Cherry  
Creek Presbyterian Church Missions Banquet**

**October 14th–16th: WGA Leadership Retreat**

**October 30th Speaking at Chinese Church of Denver  
on pornography**

**March 31st–April 2nd 2006: WGA Family and  
Friends Retreat**

**Our new Website was  
launched last month!  
Check it out:**

**[www.whergraceabounds.org](http://www.whergraceabounds.org)**

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*A Measure of Grace*  
is edited by  
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*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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# A Measure of Grace

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## The Truth About Touch *by Mary Heathman*



It was the fall of 1985, the year before Where Grace Abounds was incorporated. Twelve group members and three leaders were gathered in the basement of a local business. We prayed together as we did each week after our meeting. One man had asked for prayer for a personal need and we gathered around him. With his permission, I rested my hands on his shoulders as we prayed. The meeting ended with a couple of announcements, and it seemed natural to leave my hands on his shoulders for a moment before we closed. As the rest of the group members were leaving, he asked if he could talk with me privately.

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***"Is something wrong,  
Jerry?" I asked.***

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**“No, I just wanted to thank you for putting your hands on me.” His eyes flooded, his face reddened, and he looked down at his shoes as if ashamed. “I can’t remember the last time someone touched me. I know my parents must have—mothers hold their babies—but I just can’t remember. Anyway, I just wanted to thank you.”**

Jerry was the first person to tell me how his early development had been plagued by touch deprivation. Over the next few years, it became such a common thread in the stories of people who came for help that I began to research and speak at group about it regularly.

From time to time, in discussions among ministry leaders on different approaches to healing ministry, the issue of touch deprivation comes up. We all know it is often a causative factor in arrested or delayed childhood development. And we all know that any attempt to offer touch, even therapeutic touch, as part of a healing program is controversial. We want to be careful, as we have heard the horror stories of the misuse and abuse of touch in ministries. But we also want to minister in the fullness of God’s love—including the loving touch of a brother or sister who cares.

*Even if there weren’t objective scientific studies to tell us touch was important, we have another powerful witness to the need for touch: our emotions!*

My research notes on this topic include references to three articles I saw advertised on magazine racks in the grocery store over the years. As I stood in line, I would read the titles. In *Infants*, in May of 1990, there was an article called, “Preemie News: Risks and Benefits of Handling Premature Babies.” The *Reader’s Digest*, in January of 1992, featured “The Sense That Shapes Our Future.” *Cosmopolitan*, in August of 1991, highlighted, “Squeeze, Please: The Amazing Power of Touch.” These

were just a few—I remember being amazed at how often the topic was featured on the covers of leading magazines.

All of the magazines quoted their expert sources, some flaky and suspect, others scientific and credible. I noticed that all sources that were quoted agreed on a few basics, which could all be boiled down to two major

points:

- Touch is important; we must have it!!!
- Touch is powerful—Be careful!!!

Dr. Gary Collins in his book, *Christian Counseling*, has only four references to touching listed in the index:

- “Resistant to touch,” is a symptom of a troubled client.

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It is clear from the context of these verses that it is not good for a person to be a loner. Also assumed are the goodness of closeness, even bodily warmth, and being as closely related as three strands of one rope.

I will offer one more compelling picture from John 13:23: “One of them, the disciple Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. . . . leaning back against Jesus, John asked him ‘Lord, who is it?’” The experts in early church culture tell us that the position for dining was reclining, leaning on your elbow. As the disciples gathered at dinner, they were stretched out at the table, and this verse describes John inclining his head and shoulders onto Jesus to talk quietly with him—a warm closeness is described here between Jesus and John.

Please don’t take my word as the last word; read the Scriptures, ask for the discernment and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as you study and pray it through. But don’t simply dismiss these thoughts either. Ask God for freedom from your own understanding, possible false beliefs you may hold, and from the enemy’s influence. Ask, “What is the Truth about Touch?”

Next month, I will write a little about the difference between good touch and bad touch. In the meantime, please pray for the men and women in WGA groups that they will find

healthy and nurturing relationships and be careful in the process!

I am praying that the Body of Christ can be that warm, close medicine for the hurting people in our society. And I believe that, just like Jerry, they will begin to heal when they are welcomed warmly into the fellowship, perhaps with a holy kiss and a warm hug at the impulse of the Holy Spirit! ✂

*Note: For illustrations for why it is important to know the truth about touch, read Elton’s story elsewhere in this newsletter. Notice how the Lord used the Body of Christ to bring healing into a man’s life.*



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- “Touch gives reassurance, comfort. It’s very important and helpful, but it can be threatening to a client (sexually abused for instance) and even dangerous.” He warns, “when in doubt, don’t.”
- A Reference to sex education – dating and petting—is listed.
- In Parent/Child relationships damage is done by avoidance of touch: (cuddling, hugging, or affectionate touch.)

Dr. Collins’ comments are well supported by most mental health practitioners whether secular or Christian.

So, I repeat:

- Touch is important; we must have it!!!
- Touch is powerful—Be careful!!!

Even if there weren’t objective scientific studies to tell us touch was important, we have another powerful witness to the need for touch: our emotions! Our emotions – our deepest yearnings and longings—tell us that the need for touch is universal.

Even in our language its importance shows up. “Let me see it,” doesn’t really mean we want to “see” it. We want to hold it, feel it. In fact, we don’t even feel like we know about something until we have touched and handled it. And we ourselves want to be touched – we somehow know it’s

a part of being deeply known.

Dr. Dan Allender in his book, *The Wounded Heart*, makes the point that sexual-abuse victims, particularly those who are repeatedly abused, were “set-up” for the abuse by the absence of legitimate warmth. Without relational nurturing, and appropriate touch, they were left “starving” for touch – yearning so deeply that even the confused, shaming touch of abuse is better than nothing but the vacuum of need inside.

A look at Scripture also affirms the naturalness of touch. During Jesus’ ministry we see in Luke 18:15, people were bringing babies for Jesus’ touch. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples, and said, “Look, It is I . . . Touch me and see” (Luke 24:34).

**Jesus said, “. . . Touch me and see.”**

There is also an interesting series of word pictures in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:

- Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!
- Also, if two lie down together they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?
- A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

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## A Story Of Healing

by Elton Moose, an Exodus ministry director  
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I entered the pastoral ministry after college. My first pastorate was a church in the Appalachia of Ohio — Southwestern part. The church was very demonstrative in worship, which I enjoyed very much. As a part of their worship these people were not afraid of hugging one another. My next pastorate was in North Eastern Ohio where the worship was very restrained and there was little physical demonstration. Guess what? That’s where my homosexual desires began to increase! I sought help, but most certainly in the wrong places. (By the way, I was sexually involved with the same sex from about 7-8 and especially in my teenage years.)

When I was in therapy, it was a mystery to me that my first eight years of pastoral ministry were so free from homosexual desires, since they later increased until I was exposed and had to leave the ministry. Having studied, learned and grown,

I have come to attribute the freedom of my first pastorate to a very warm congregation whose members were not afraid to touch others, even through hugs during services. My emotional and spiritual needs were being met.

When I reentered pastoral ministry, I served as an interim pastor of a congregation where some of the men were not afraid of hugs. It was fulfilling! Four years ago, I began pasturing a small congregation who cannot afford a full-time pastor. This fits into my counseling and ministry schedule and helps them too. This congregation – men and women – are very hugging people. I grew up as touch deprived and have learned that it’s people like these, who are secure in their sexuality, whose touch brings GREAT healing to others.

I have found great comfort in the fact that John lay on Jesus’ breast while Jesus was on earth! And THEY were not gay!! Today, I am very secure in my own sexuality; I know who I am and to whom I belong – it’s JESUS!

To further illustrate: A few years

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## Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

Christ, it is true, told His hearers that the Kingdom of Heaven was 'within' or 'among' them. But His hearers were not *merely* in 'a state or mind'. The planet He had created was beneath their feet, His sun above their heads; blood and lungs and guts were working in the bodies He had invented, photons and sound waves of His devising were blessing them with the sight of His human face and the sound of His voice. We are never *merely* in a state of mind. The prayer and the meditation made in howling wind or quiet sunshine, in morning alacrity or evening resignation, in youth or age, good health or ill, may be equally, but are differently, blessed. Already in this present life we have all seen how God can take up all these seeming irrelevancies into the spiritual fact and cause them to bear no small part in making the blessing of that moment to be the particular blessing it was—as fire can burn coal and wood equally but a wood fire is different from a coal one. From this factor of environment



Christianity does not teach us to desire a total release. We desire, like St. Paul, not to be un-clothed but to be re-clothed: to find not the formless Everywhere-and-Nowhere but the promised land, that Nature which will be always and perfectly—as present

Nature is partially and intermittently—the instrument for that music which will then arise between Christ and us . . .

There is in our present pilgrim condition plenty of room (more room than most of us like) for abstinence and renunciation and mortifying our natural desires. But behind all asceticism the thought should be, 'Who will trust us with the true wealth if we cannot be

trusted with the wealth that perishes?' Who will trust me with a spiritual body if I cannot control even an earthly body? These small and perishable bodies we now have were given to us as ponies are given to schoolboys. We must learn the man-age: not that we may some day be free of horses altogether but that some day we may ride bare-back, confident and rejoicing, those greater

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mounts, those winged, shining and world-shaking horses which perhaps even now expect us with impatience, pawing and snorting in the King's stables. Not that the gallop would be of any value unless it were a gallop with the King; but how else—since He has retained His own charger—should be accompany Him?

C.S. Lewis Miracles



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ago while traveling to work I was feeling extremely lonely. About nine miles from home, I cried out to Jesus and prayed "Jesus, you were a man and today I feel the need for the arms of a man around me." Then, I spiritually felt Jesus sitting beside me, and I felt his spiritual arms around me. It gave me peace. That experience was repeated twice within a few weeks. It has never happened since! Jesus knew my touch deficit and how deep it was. HE met me at the point of need. Praise the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God!

At the Exodus conference, another ministry leader said. "What has happened to you Elton, you are more free to speak up?" My reply is that in Jesus I have found so much freedom from homosexuality! My journey has been long, it has been tough,

and it has been excruciating at times, BUT PRAISE GOD! I AM FINALLY FREE! I credit people who were solid in their sexuality. God used them to set me free! And they didn't even know of my struggle!

I know there are others who suffered as I did and who need to hear my testimony. We [ministry leaders] can argue all we want, but Jesus has His way of setting us free. He doesn't work the same in every person's life, because He comes to meet us at the point of our deepest need! ✂