

November At a Glance

**November 5th: First Denver Friends
Missions Banquet**

**November 25th: WGA Activity—Movie
Marathon Day**

December And Beyond

December 2nd: Intercessory Prayer

**December 30th: WGA Open Meeting—please
contact the WGA office for more information**

January 7th: Intercessory Prayer

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

April 27th-29th: Restoring the Glory Conference

**May 12th-13th: WGA Seminars—stay tuned for
more information**

**June 27th—July 2nd: Exodus International
Conference, Indiana Wesleyan University**

Thursday Night Group

**November 3rd: 38 people
November 10th: 37 people
November 17th: 41 people
November 24th: No Group**

**Orientation meeting - 3 new
people**

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A Measure of Grace
is edited by
Elodie Ballantine Emig

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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That They May Be Reconciled *by Mary Heathman*

The other day, while standing in line in a local coffee shop, I picked up the featured "Holiday" CD to see if any of my favorite Christmas songs were on the play list. There were the traditional—"White Christmas," "Walking In a Winter Wonderland," "Frosty the Snow Man"—but none gave a hint of the Christ in Christmas.

Let's see, where shall I go from here? Shall we commiserate about the over-commercialization of Christmas? How about shaking our heads in disapproval over the political correctness of it all? Well, we could probably wring something meaningful out of those discussions, but

that just isn't
where my heart is

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WGA
where grace abounds

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today.

When I read the back of that CD, it struck me how easy it would be these days to get through the entire season without being confronted with the astounding news of the gospel. I realized that we can't count on the witness of the season as much as we used to.

I remember how, as an unbeliever, I would gear up for the Christmas season with so many mixed feelings. I wanted to make the holiday special for my children, and went out of my way to create family traditions and memories. But the sheer magnitude and pervasiveness of the message of the Christ-child haunted me as I listened to piped in music while shopping for gifts and holiday foods. The radio channels all featured Christmas songs. I couldn't escape the ringing bells and melodies that proclaimed "Joy to the World" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." Even as I held to my agnostic belief in God's irrelevance to me, the message that He was born to bring peace to the

world ran painfully counter to my own internal lack of peace. I knew I wanted Peace, and eventually turned toward Him with great relief.

Today my heart yearns on behalf of the agnostics and atheists this season. What will give them pause? What solutions for their own internal conflicts will the season present?

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George Barna, in "The Barna Report," October-December 1999 said that atheists and agnostics are wrestling with the same issues with which Christians struggle. We all are looking for:

- ❖ Meaning in life
- ❖ Significant relationships with others
- ❖ Influence in the lives of others
- ❖ A moral life

Barna went on to say, "It is also encouraging to realize that so many 'irreligious' people maintain some type of connection to a Christian church -- no matter how inconsistent or tenuous that con-

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nection might be."

I am encouraged by Barna's research. I can testify from my own experience regarding the connection he is talking about—I irrationally insisted on being married in a church, though I said I didn't believe, and almost always attended a Christmas Eve candlelight service. The connection was inconsistent and tenuous, but nonetheless real and unrelenting. As I recall, it was suspiciously like a "still small voice" that kept drawing me to Him.

Now, I want to be clear—I don't want to start a campaign to replace secular songs with religious ones in our stores. I truly don't think it is good to haunt people with the Message. But I also really want people to know that **Jesus Christ is the source of all that is good; He is the Source from which we come; He is the End toward which we travel; He is our Companion along the way.** I so desire that all men, women, boys and girls would come to know Him as He is, a loving, gracious, patient, forgiving, comforting, joyful God.

Please join me as I pray for those who don't believe in Jesus, that

their hearts will be strangely warmed this season, and drawn to the Spirit of the Living God!

May the Lord bless and warm you this Christmas, inside and out! ☆



(Abstinence continued from page 5)

havior is what we need.

- ❖ It teaches us how to redirect the impulse to gratify our immediate desires.
- ❖ It challenges us to consider the bigger picture.

A successful program must help us to develop healthy behavior *automatically*. Otherwise, we will have to do the near impossible: “stop and think about it,” when swept up in a rush to the forbidden.

With Compassionate Abstinence, we stop thinking so much about what we are trying to leave behind and start looking at ourselves and others with more compassion. Instead of making goals, we create more value in our life. We value ourselves more, (remembering who we really are, the righteousness of Christ) which automatically makes us value our health and well being.

We learn to motivate ourselves and each other with "Acts of Kindness," especially when we relapse. (Who are more likely to repeat mistakes, those who punish themselves with guilt or shame or those who value themselves?) The point is to change the motivation to act out from *avoiding* core hurts to *experiencing* core value

(the person we were created to be in Christ).

With Compassionate Abstinence, you learn to view your core hurts compassionately, and when they occur, to look for the light of Christ in you and in those around you. In that light, emanating from deep within, we will not have to worry about “managing” our behavior. The spirit within us will inspire both the will and the action. ★

Note: This article was adapted from an article, “Compassionate Eating,” in the *CompassionPower* newsletter, Wednesday, November 20, 2005: the original article may be found at http://www.thewholecommunity.com/compassionate_eating.php

Ho Ho, Hold Onto Your Virginity

By Warren Throckmorton, PhD
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Given his decision making power on the matter of gifts, Santa Claus got some seriously good cookies most Christmas eves from my girls. Like most children, mine did not know that there is much more to the real Saint Nick than toys and cookies. The jolly fellow could easily be considered the patron saint of purity.

Recently looking into the legend of St. Nick, I learned that Saint Nicholas lived early in the fourth century in what is now Turkey. He was orphaned as a young boy but left with substantial means by his parents. He used this inheritance to benefit others, especially children. He became the Bishop of Myra in Turkey and played an important leadership role in the church. Called the Wonderworker, he was well known for his generosity to children, hence his association with the legend of Santa

Claus. The story of a benevolent soul giving gifts to children is a part of many cultures with many names. Saint Nick as another name for Santa Claus persists to this day.

I also read in my study that Saint Nicholas is a patron saint of virgins. Consulting with a Catholic friend, I learned that a patron saint is one who prays to God on behalf of a petitioner. So, in the Catholic tradition, if one wants to remain chaste, one may pray to Saint Nicholas who will then lift up the petitioner in spiritual prayer to God. As an aside, his patronage may explain at least one of the criteria for being in either the naughty or nice category when Saint Nick checks and rechecks his list. But I digress. There is more to this story.

Legend has it that Saint Nicholas became aware of a desperately poor parishioner having three daughters with no dowry to recommend them for marriage. The father had planned to sell them

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into prostitution to provide some means of support. By night, Saint Nicholas secretly brought bags of gold on three separate occasions to the man's home. These generous visitations allowed the three daughters to have sufficient means to avoid whoredom and later strike a marriage covenant. On the third visit to deliver the gift, Nicholas was caught in the act of generosity by the man.


Many make the Santa Claus-like association of this story to Saint Nicholas the gift giver. I see an additional angle. For reasons that often involve money, women today have few benefactors, few Saint Nicks. Bob Dylan sang it truly two decades ago that today's culture seems to promote "old men turning young daughters into whores." A look at any magazine rack will tell you that there is a market for flesh and the demographic is predominantly male, ages 12 to 90. Research company, Visiongain, projects the pornography market to be a 70 billion industry by 2006. That is a lot of gold being used to take advantage of women rather than promote their virtue.

Liberation from traditional female gender roles has been little help

here. Women today are not, and should not be as helpless as those three girls aided by Saint Nicholas. However, girls gone wild with sexual freedom most often are exploited by men. I doubt we would see as much skin if there were no gawking male purchasers, eager to buy and sell innocence as commerce.

Harmful to both men and women, graphic sexuality, even the somewhat scaled down prime time variety, contributes to the overall commodification of sex. Viewed through the eyes of a pornographer, sex is commerce and sexual purity is restraint of trade.

We need Saint Nicholas today. We need the gifts of chastity and modesty. We need more respecters of purity and fewer of those who would sell young people into the brothel of commercialism.

We need you today Saint Nicholas, the Wonderworker. Our sons and daughters need the good gifts of those who truly value their health and purity. ★ 

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Compassionate Abstinence

*Adapted by Mary Heathman
from Compassionate Eating
(see credit at end of article)*

Who is more likely to sustain constructive behavior, the valued self (the spirit is willing) or the devalued self (but the flesh is weak)?

To use an example that hits me where *I* live these days, if I believe it is hard to lose weight and keep it off because I *lack* something, like discipline, will power, or just common sense, my efforts will come from shame regarding what I am, rather than value of my health and well being.

When the shame gets exhausting, distracting, confusing, or overwhelming, as it *always* does, my human nature presses me to revert to the familiar, which requires far less mental energy. That means the *old* eating habits, or any addiction of choice, whatever it may be.

Our problem in reaching and *maintaining* our desired behavior is not due to personal failings. We have plenty of discipline – we have gone through so much trouble, time and time again to break free. We certainly have will power

or we wouldn't keep trying after each failure.

The problem lies not in ourselves (except for the sin nature that afflicts us all), but in our ill chosen recovery programs, which inadvertently set us up to fail.

No recovery program can succeed by *dominating* our consciousness with the behavior we are trying to change. This actually *increases* the unconscious impulse to act out.

Setting behavioral goals as the primary means of recovery often makes us fail in the long run. In other words, we win some, we lose some. In the long run, winning and losing even out and put us right back where we started, often even worse off.

No recovery program can succeed *unless*:

- ❖ It helps resolve the core hurts that drive our desire to act out.
- ❖ It provides the truth to counter the false belief that sinful be-

(Continued on page 6)