

January At a Glance

January 6th: First Commitment Group Meeting

January 7th: Intercessory Prayer

January 7th: First Survivors of Abuse Group Meeting

January 14th: First Growth Group Meeting

Thursday Night Group

January 5th: 39
January 12th: 43
January 19th: 37
January 26th: 40

Orientation meeting - 4 new people

February And Beyond

February 9th: Speaking at Christian Fellowship School

February 22nd: Speaking at Arvada Covenant Church

February 26th: Speaking to youth at Cherry Hills Community Church

February 28th: Speaking at Abundant Life Christian Center

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

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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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Crisis or Opportunity? by Mary Heathman

*T*he *Exorcist* was the movie expected to win big at the Academy Awards in 1974. The previews were enough to scare me off, so I wasn't interested in seeing it. Besides, conservative critics warned us of the evil influence of the film. In my newfound faith, I determined to resist this "appearance of evil" in our culture.

Meanwhile, life at the office was tense. I had been praying for an opportunity to share my faith with my co-workers, who were increasingly disinterested. To make matters worse, they were all going to see *The Exorcist* and wanted me to go with them. I was horrified!

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1986 - 2006

20
YEARS

WHERE
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For the next few days, I prayed earnestly that my friends would be prevented from going to the film, that they would be protected from its evil influences. I actually cried when I heard that my office manager, Diana, was going—she was in a rough marriage, had been visiting a medium, and I was sure that *The Exorcist* would put her over the edge! I was afraid for her, and thought *The Exorcist* would turn her even farther away from the Lord.

My prayers were not answered as I hoped, the plans were made, and my coworkers went to the show. As an intercessor, I tasted my first major defeat.

On Monday morning, Diana was waiting for me at my desk when I came in. She blurted out, “I want to know if the Bible really says what it said in *The Exorcist*!” She had the words and references written down, and I looked them up in my Bible and let her read it. Her face lost its color; she looked at me, and said, “So, what you’ve been telling me is really true!”

I was dumbfounded. The movie I

had been praying against was the very thing the Lord used to get my friend’s attention.

The film most panned by conservative critics this year is *Brokeback Mountain*, I am not suggesting that anyone should see the film. But I do want to point out a principle that has been a distinctive of Where Grace Abounds since its beginning—***God meets people where they are; so should we.***

*Many people
in our culture
are most
informed about
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watch.*

When Terry Mattingly, now a nationally syndicated columnist, taught a class at Denver Seminary several years ago, he made the point again and again that people in our culture are increasingly getting their education from the media, and most specifically from films and television. Time has served to underscore his commentary on our culture. Many people in our culture are most informed about and affected by the television shows and movies they watch.

The question is not primarily whether we will do likewise—stay up on all the films; go see *Brokeback Mountain*—but how will we

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Why is my body becoming unreliable?

How do I deal with failures and successes because they are beginning to accumulate? How do these affect my soul? How do I manage these?

Who are these young people that want to replace me?

What am I going to do with my doubts and my fears? There is a lot more to be afraid of and doubt: spiritually, financially, etc.

60’s: When do I have to stop doing the things that have defined me? How will I know when it is time to stop?

Whom will I die with? Who are the friends that are close to us because of who we are, not because of what we do?

Why do I feel ignored by a large part of the population?

What will be my spiritual legacy?

What will I pass on to other people? How will I be remembered?

What is left undone in my life?

What does old age look like?

70’s/80’s: Does anybody remember who I once was?

How much of my life can I still control?

What can I contribute in the world?

Why do I feel angry and irritable?

Is God really there?

Am I ready to face death?

Will I be missed when I am dead?

For more information read Gordon MacDonald, *A Resilient Life* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2005). All of the above information was taken from Dwight Scull’s conference notes in 2005.

(Crisis Continued from page 2)

respond to those who do? Will we condemn the pipeline they feed from? Or shall we do as the Apostle Paul did, studying the culture of Athens until he found common ground—a statue to the Unknown God. Upon this foundation of understanding the culture, he first commended the Athenians for their religious nature, and then used their god-symbol as a platform to share the good news. *(I believe he would never have had their ear if he had walked through their garden and written a review in their paper about its decadence and deception.)*

In this newsletter, we have included excerpts from a letter from a group member who tells how this film has impacted him. I could fill several pages with the experiences of several other men and women who have felt the Lord's touch as they brought their reactions to the film into their small group discussions, prayer time and counseling sessions.

This is the character of the God we serve; He will use whatever means at His disposal to woo His people. I believe this is our call-

ing as well. Yet, sometimes I fear that as we “run from the appearance of evil,” believers are running from the people God wants us to love in His name.

Sheep without shepherds will continue to flock to films and television. When their appetite for love is triggered – who will be there to feed the sheep the milk and meat of the grace and truth of God? If we don't, who will? Who will represent God's heart—God loves these people and wants to speak to their condition – who will do this with Him?

Lord, help us love the world instead of condemning it—and help us know the difference between engaging our culture for You versus becoming one with our culture and thereby losing our witness. Make us dispensers of truth and grace in all our relationships.★

For more information and discussion questions visit the Christianity Today website at: www.christianitytoday.com

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Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader *By Dwight Scull*

I attended a conference at which the speaker, Gordon MacDonald, talked about the questions we ask during different stages of our lives. These questions are related to our emotional development. If we are not able to answer them to our satisfaction, we will be held back in life until we can do so.

Furthermore, MacDonald stated that those who have answered these questions live fuller and healthier lives, and that life events, such as abuse, trauma, chronic or fatal illnesses can hinder or greatly complicate the process. He gave the example of a 30-year-old woman asking the questions of a 70 year old because she found out that she had a terminal illness. Here is a list of some of the questions that people ask in each age category:

20's: Who am I as a man or a woman, and how am I different from my family of origin? What am I going to do with my life?

Can I love, and am I lovable?
What part of me needs correcting?
What idea or person will I organize my life around (faith)?

30's: How do I prioritize all of the demands that are being made on my life?

How far can I go in fulfilling my ambitions? I may not be able to achieve all of my dreams.

Who is a part of my primary community?

What does my spiritual life look like? Do I even have one? This can be the driest of spiritual times in life.

Why am I not a better person?

40's: What were the influences that informed me?

Why do some people seem to be doing better than I do?

Why am I so often disappointed with myself and others?

Why are limitations beginning to outnumber options?

Why do I seem to face so many uncertainties?

50's: Why is time moving so quickly?

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Brokeback Mountain

Excerpts From a Group Member's Experience



"To see or not to see, that is the question."

[With admittedly mixed motives,] I saw the controversial film, *Brokeback Mountain*. Celibate and "out of the lifestyle" but two-short years now, I was met with a flood, no a tidal wave, of feelings and emotions.

My first thought was, "God, why do you *care* whom I love?" I also thought, "I want that again." More than I actually want [a man], I want passion like that again in my life. If ever I was tempted to go act out and be frivolous and irrational, it was definitely right after seeing the film.

But I survived the challenge, at least the physical challenge. However, there was the matter of what was going on in my head. There was another cinema playing full-screen, and I didn't have to even leave my house.

I did have other thoughts, the more "spiritual" ones. Past all the "passion" and the relationship and the scenery, I have a teeny, tiny little spec of something the size of dust (it seems) that I cling to. While I know clinging to something the

size of dust seems futile and stupid, I cling nonetheless. The dust sized speck is the notion that God calls *Himself* a jealous lover.

I don't think it's a gay or straight thing; I am just convinced that He truly is that lover. He wants to be the one passionately pursuing me . . . I am convinced, however, that I am only to get a glimpse in the here and now of what is to come. His word to me isn't "no." It's "Not here, not now." This place is not my home. Like the cowboys in the movie, I am on a mission; herding sheep isn't my real job, nor is Wyoming my true home.

I don't know if I will ever again experience intensity like I did with [my former partner] in this life time. *[My understanding is that I wasn't] supposed to experience it the way I did*, but it happened.

If I can go that nuts over a cop from Missouri, what will I do when the Creator of the universe runs to me, arms wide open, the first time I see Him face to face? After I shed my sin and my struggle, what will it be like? I imagine *Brokeback Mountain* will look like the Bronx in

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comparison. That little speck of dust within me is what keeps me going.

I have another way of looking at that speck of dust. It is called "faith." In a 225 pound man, it is just that size, a speck of dust. Yet it is the one thing that I hold on to and consider dearer than life itself. I know that I know that I know my lover is waiting for me. He isn't in Wyoming.

Someday it will be all right. I don't mean "alright," I mean **all** right. Someday the wait will be over and He will be mine and I will be His. It doesn't matter who laughs or what beats me up along the way. Someone is waiting for me; He is not a stranger and much, much more than a friend.

The world tells me that the "dust" is not enough and that the fantasy in my head will never manifest. I know He is waiting; He speaks to my heart...I see Him in the sun setting over Pikes Peak. Laugh if you want; I'm not on a honeymoon and this is no picnic, but I know He is waiting for me. And that is how I can continue waiting for Him.

For me, seeing that movie was a bad choice; it messed me up. And once again, I see the snare before me. The lie in my head goes like this: "The only thing that is real is that God set me up and doesn't care. There is no person and there is no passion; give up. You're all alone in this world, and that is how you are going to DIE. Give in."

That message is coming from the proverbial wolf. Once again, my heart trembles with fear and sadness. But the still small spec in my heart gives me hope. The wolf may kill and eat me, but I'd rather die than give up. My lover is waiting for me. With everything within me I believe it. The faith goes deeper than both the fear and the doubt.

I have another way of looking at that speck of dust. It is called "faith." In a 225 pound man, it is just that size, a speck of dust.

I don't know if any of us will ever have . . . passion . . . on earth or not. I DO know that we WILL have it; in both a place and a time that are perfect. I'm holding out hope for ALL of us. [Many are] tired of waiting. But I say, "Will you continue to wait, or settle for the cheap imposter? Our lover awaits; stay the course. Be encouraged; the wait is worth the struggle." ★