



April 2006
Volume 10, Issue 4

A Measure of *Grace*

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

I'm Embarrassed

by Mary Heathman



If there were a Christian Supreme Court acknowledged by all followers of Christ, my conscience would compel me to stand before the judges and accuse my "brother," Fred Phelps. I would most likely tremble, with tears streaming down my face, but I would do it; I would surely call him out to be put on trial for subverting the good news of Jesus Christ.

Phelps and his clan picket the funerals of people who have died of AIDS and soldiers who have died in Iraq. When these reports come to us, we ask, "Why would anyone want to do such a thing?"

(Continued on page 2)

1986 - 2006

20
YEARS

WHERE
GRACE
ABOUNDS

Where Grace Abounds
P.O. Box 18871
Denver, Colorado 80218

Office: 303/863-7757
Fax: 303/863-7769

email:
info@wheregraceabounds.org
Website:
www.wheregraceabounds.org

wga
where grace abounds

(Embarrassed continued from page 1)

Investigative reporter, Jeff Golimowski, went inside Fred Phelps's world looking for answers. Golimowski says that:

(Phelps) protests soldiers' funerals because he says their deaths are evidence of God's vengeance.

"Dying time is truth time," said Phelps. "That would seem to us to be God's forum of choice."

We asked Phelps, "Do you preach hate?"

"Not in the pejorative sense I don't," said Phelps. "The truth of the matter is I'm the only one who loves these fags."

Phelps believes by pointing out what he calls the sin of homosexuality, he's fulfilling the Bible's commandment to love thy neighbor, but not letting his sin go unrebuked.

"These kissypoo preachers that are telling them they are all right like they are, they don't love them, they hate them," said Phelps.

He lives in a world familiar to 18th century preachers where hell is real and close by. Where God is often angry and vengeful. He's not sure if he will be going to heaven, but he's pretty sure about members of the media. He often sends us press releases full of slurs and

Bible verses and calls us on his website 'fag enablers.'

I'm embarrassed by Fred Phelps's interpretation and use of the Scripture; by the way he expresses none of God's kindness (in order that people might be led to repentance), but only judgment and condemnation. I would like him to be held accountable for this mistreatment of people, for his

constant and persistent mishandling of God's word.

It isn't that I don't care about the Law. I surely do. I agree with Charles Finney when he said, *"Evermore the Law must prepare the way for the Gospel; to overlook this in instructing souls is almost certain to result in*

false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill the church with false converts." And our Savior, Himself, has said, "Whosoever does and teaches the Law will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:19).

The Law is good. It is for our benefit. To quote the psalmist in the 119th chapter, "My eyes

(Continued on page 7)

***The gospel is
clear that it isn't
our sin that
sends us to hell;
it is our refusal
to receive God's
remedy...***



Stepping Up

By Roger Jones

As most of you know by now, in April of 2007, I will be stepping into the Executive Director position which Mary Heathman will be vacating. Mary will continue in a full-time ministry position with Where Grace Abounds, but with a different title, Founder.

It was in March of 1995, that I first came to WGA as a participant. Back then, I had no interest in working for a ministry like this. I was here to take care of my “little problem” and planned to return to my life in six months or so. I had no idea what God had in store for me, which I am sure was for the best. Had I known then what I would be stepping into today, I likely would have never packed my bags and moved to Denver from Texas eleven years ago.

During my years here, I have experienced a lot and held several different positions with WGA. For my first year and a half, I was a participant in the various groups and ministry opportunities available. That time was incredibly significant for my growth, as I began the process of learning about healthy inti-

macy and leaving behind my homosexual identity. In October of 1996, I began working eight hours per week as the



Administrative Assistant to Nancy Hicks, Office Manager at that time. The following spring, I began working 32 hours per week, all the while working as a waiter in a local restaurant to supplement my income. Later that year, my hours increased to full-time and I took over as the Office Manager.

Throughout the next several years, more changes were in store for me. Kirk Williams decided to leave the WGA staff, and many of his responsibilities fell to me. Eventually, my job title switched to Operations Director. For a few years, I served in two positions, Operations Director and Assistant Program Director, in which capacity I assisted Scott Kingry with the various programs WGA provides. Currently, I continue as the Operations Director, and Scott has a new Assistant Program Director, Pat Bott.

(Continued on page 6)

Changes Ahead—The Future of the Discipleship Department

By Scott Kingry

The biggest question I've been asked since we've announced Mary's move to Founding Director and Roger's move to Executive Director is, "What are *you* going to do now Scott?"

Well, with those two at the helm, I'm sure Pat and I will just kick back, play a few hands of cards and feed each other peeled grapes with all that extra time we'll have.

That's a funny (and scary) picture, but there is an already existing, full-blown Discipleship Department that's been working like a well oiled machine for the last 20 years. Within this department lies everything from our weekly Thursday Night drop-in support group, Discipleship Counseling, groups like Going Deeper with God & Survivors of Abuse, all our outside speaking and fun community activities to working with interns.

The beauty of how the Where Grace Abounds Program developed over the years under Mary's leadership



is that all our structure was to be looked at as "scaffolding." Scaffolding is a structure that can be moved, put in place, taken up and down as the needs come and go. That means that everything can be constantly evaluated. Every time we sit down at our yearly planning meeting, our first question is whether or not our program is meeting the needs of those attending and the broader range of people we serve: are we fulfilling our mission statement?

With this in mind, a twenty year bench mark seems like a good time to re-evaluate our current scaffolding structure within the Program Department, dream a bit and begin asking questions. *Are we ready for growth?*

(Continued on page 5)

(Changes continued from page 4)

Maybe someday there will not be just one drop-in group, but many groups available up and down the Front Range and on different evenings. *Are we meeting the needs of those coming to WGA?* Initially, we worked with men and women conflicted with homosexuality and family members. Over the years we've grown and expanded to meet a wider array of sexual issues (sexual addiction, sexual abuse, pedophilia, transsexuality, transvestitism, sexual anorexia, infidelity)—how can our program better serve the men and women God brings to us? *What services need to be added or deleted?* With the shift in job titles, some of Mary's and Roger's current tasks and responsibilities might find a home in the Discipleship Department. I'm usually a "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" kind of guy, but now seems like a good time to take a hard look at everything we do in light of our transition alongside of current cultural trends. What is becoming obsolete and needs to be let go? Where are the holes in our program and what services can fill them? What new paths does God want us to explore?

Of course, with all of these questions of growth and expansion comes the need for resources in the form of time, money and more leadership (which is a whole other area of prayer and planning!). As we ride through this transition of leadership at Where Grace Abounds, it doesn't look like Pat and I will have time to be resting on our laurels. Guess the cards and grapes will have to wait. ★

(Stepping up continued from page 3)

As I think back over my time with WGA, I am grateful to have been able to glean as much as I have from working with Mary. Her vision, which began Where Grace Abounds 20 years ago, is still alive. I never dreamed that I would be the one to carry this vision into the next 20 years or so. Again, I am grateful that God took His time revealing this to me!

I have many ideas about how best to further the mission of Where Grace Abounds. For example, I would love to see our staff increase so that we can provide more groups and learning opportunities in our community. Through our current program, we work with 65-85 people each week in groups and discipleship counseling, more if you include the speaking we do several times each month and our monthly newsletter. I am excited for the day when WGA is ministering to two, three and even four times these numbers.

Initially, I plan to take the next year to prayerfully consider what vision God is giving me for WGA. I can spout off lots of ideas, but I want those to come from Him, not from

me.

Every transition has a few bumps. Change is uncomfortable for almost everyone at some level, but I feel God has given us a transition plan which feels good and right. While in some ways I am surprised to find myself stepping into the position of Executive Director, in other ways I am not. Looking back, I see how God has been preparing me and WGA for this, especially during the past few years. The good thing about those “bumps” is they provide an opportunity to pause and take a look upward, to check in with God to see if we are on the right track.

I am humbled to see how God has been true to His Word in my life. He has used my greatest weaknesses and changed them into something for His Glory. Praise Him! I am reminded of II Corinthians 12:9, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*”

Please pray for me as God continues to develop and refine me into the man he created me to be. And please pray for WGA as we move into this exciting new season. ★

*Initially,
I plan to take
the next year to
prayerfully
consider what
vision God is
giving me for
WGA.*

(Embarrassed continued from page 2)

stream with tears, for your law is not being obeyed."

But Phelps makes a mistake in his preaching. He keeps telling people that homosexuals are going to hell for their homosexual behavior, that God is judging America for being soft on sin. But the function of the Law is to reveal how far off the mark we are and how much we need a Savior. The gospel is clear that it isn't our sin that sends us to hell; it is our refusal to receive God's remedy—His Son's crucifixion and resurrection—the redemption of our sins. As Ron Mosely says in his book, *The Spirit of the Law*, "Modern believers fail to realize the Law was not to achieve salvation, but to expose and remove sin from the life of believers."

A friend of mine once said, as we were discussing the shortcomings of another, "I wonder what it is that I am blind to in my own life that is so easy for someone else to see." I pray that as I speak words of rebuke, it may come from a clear heart, having dealt with the logs in my own eyes before I try to point out the splinters in the eyes of another.

Let's pray about this together, shall we? I know that Phelps is not our enemy. Rather, our en-

emy is the legion of principalities and powers of this dark world at work against the purposes of God—let us rise up and fight them with the spiritual weapons of our warfare, with prayer and praise, truth and grace. And we know in the end, God's purposes will be accomplished, for He promises that this is so. For this we can rejoice! ★



March

At a Glance

March 5th and 12th: Spoke to youth at Cherry Hills Community Church

March 24th: Exodus Regional Meeting - a gathering of local Exodus ministry leaders

March 27th: WGA Family and Friends panel at Colorado Christian University

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

April

And Beyond

April 27th-29th: Restoring the Glory Conference

May 12th: 100% Truth : 100% Grace Equipping Men and Women for Authentic Living in a Warped World
This seminar is for pastors and Christian Leaders who wish to dialogue about cultural and societal issues that impact the church. The key note speaker is Frederica Mathewes-Green.

May 12th-13th: Distortion and Reality: Authentic Living for Men and Women Living in a Warped World
This seminar is for men and women who wish to learn more about our culture and its impact upon gender, youth, and relationships. Frederica Mathewes-Green is the key note speaker.

For more info about these seminars, check out WGA's website at www.whergraceabounds.org.

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

Thursday Night Group

March 2nd: 42 people
March 9th: 37 people
March 16th: 39 people
March 23rd: 40 people
March 30th: 37 people

Orientation meeting: 10 new people

WGA Staff

Mary Heathman
Executive Director

Program Department
Scott Kingry
Program Director
Pat Bott
Assistant Program Director

Operations Department
Roger Jones
Operations Director

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.

Printed in the USA
Copyright 2006