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# A Measure of *Grace*

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1986 - 2006  
**20**  
YEARS  
WHERE  
**GRACE**  
ABOUNDS

## Men Need Church Too

*By Mary Heathman*

*At* the recent WGA conference for pastors and Christian leaders, Frederica Mathewes-Green shared her views on how the Church has lost its appeal to men and her thoughts on what will gain it back. As she described a phenomenon all too familiar to many pastors and Christian leaders, Frederica sobered us by laying out the magnitude of the problem and offered hope for its solution, all in one 45-minute talk with an extended Q & A session afterward.

After referring to a survey of Christian men which revealed that a majority of them are uncomfortable inviting a friend to their church, Frederica told of an exception to that statistic. In her Eastern Orthodox tradition, it is usually the men who find the tradition appealing and the women who are more resistant, especially at first. Asking herself what made the difference, she came to a couple of conclusions

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*where grace abounds*

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that I thought were particularly helpful: men want and need to be part of a great adventure, and they want and need to be challenged. Frederica says that the demanding nature of the disciplines of Eastern Orthodox worship is recognized by men as a great challenge. And she says that the tradition's emphasis on the individual believer as inseparable from the ancient traditions of Christianity is the great adventure bigger than themselves which men crave.

Now, the idea that men want and need adventure is not a new thought these days. A number of authors have been writing along these lines for several years. One who has wide respect among Christians is John Eldridge author of *The Sacred Romance*, *Wild at Heart* and others. I have read these books and recommend them highly for men, and for women who want to understand them better.

Other writers have exhorted the Church to get back to a balanced view of masculine and feminine, sometimes accusing the Church of allowing itself to become feminized or even emasculated. Though I understand the concerns expressed by

these critics, I have found them unhelpful in offering solutions that don't threaten to send the pendulum right back to the other extreme.

What is different about what Frederica was saying, is that unlike most men's movements that primarily lead men into extra-church experiences for their great adventures, **the Church itself can and ought to be that great adventure.** And,

unlike the critics who tend to put down the role of women in order to lift up that of men, she was celebrating and affirming men's worth and their masculinity, without throwing women and femininity out as the proverbial baby with its bath water!

I found my thoughts stirred; I am still thinking about the ramifications of her lecture. Questions are forming; a strong desire for practical application is forming. What does this mean for para-church organizations like Where Grace Abounds; how can we be part of the solution? What about the Church, what changes need to be made in how we "do church" in order to meet the fundamental needs of men as well as women? I believe that men and women alike need a great adventure

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## Reflections: Thoughts from a WGA Leader

*By Nancy Hicks*

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### Freedom in Christ Part II: Freedom from the tyranny of sin

Last month we started looking at Freedom in Christ. It will take us a lifetime even to begin to understand what Christ has done for us. The intricate nuances and staggering life changes that He has provided are endless sources of study, prayer and living. In that light, as we are scratching the surface of the topic, it is helpful to look for some of the elements that Christ's sacrifice has freed us from as well as what He had freed us to. Not only have Jesus' death and resurrection freed us from the power of the fear of death (as we talked about last month), but they have also mysteriously freed us **from** the tyrannical slavery of sin.

Romans 8:2 "The spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death."\*

Even though we are not currently living in a culture that promotes traditional slavery, the image isn't hard for us to imagine.

Picture a slave master of the most despicable proportions. His threadbare slaves eat scraps of moldy food as they collapse exhausted in the late hours of the night. His strident screams and terrifying growl reinforce continually that he will endure no failure, no rest. Any cry for mercy is met with a whip, a fist, or a cage. I have experienced this slave master-- in myself. There is no mercy. There is instead an endless, torturous cycle of acting out, guilt, acting out, guilt. The slave master in my mind said, "You **must** be perfect. You must act and perform at all times to the highest standard. Pull yourself up by your boot straps. What will people think? Why are you so weak?" And then as the cycle crested that same voice of condemnation hissed, "You are a failure. You are disgusting. You poison every good thing that comes to you. You would be better off dead."

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The anger and resentment towards that lying slave master—myself--built often to thoughts of murder—self-annihilation.

This is the slavery that Jesus promised to free us from, the power of the lying voice of condemnation and perfectionism. He has freed us to choose. “I tell you most solemnly that anyone who chooses a life of sin is trapped in a dead-end life and is, in fact, a slave. A slave is a transient, who can’t come and go at will. The Son, though, has an established position, the run of the house. So, if the Son sets you free, you are free through and through” (John 8: 35&36).

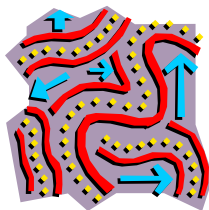
We still struggle with temptation and sin, but He has provided a new voice from a new master for our ears. This voice says, “Come to me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28 NAS); “I can do anything through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13 NAS); “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1 NAS); “[God’s] power is perfected in weakness” (II Cor 12:9 NAS); “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I Jn 1:9 NAS).

In Isaiah 61:1 Jesus speaks prophetically of himself through the prophet Isaiah,

“The Spirit of God, the Master, is on me because God anointed me.

He sent me to preach good news to the poor, heal the heartbroken, Announce freedom to all captives, pardon all prisoners.” ☆

\*All Scripture references are from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson unless otherwise noted



## Evolution of a Call to Ministry:

*By Pat Bott*

As WGA celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, I have been thinking about the fact that my involvement with WGA began in the late eighties. I was in a training class for a Christian suicide hotline when I first heard WGA staff members, Mary Heathman and Scott Kingry, speak. They taught one of the classes explaining the ministry of Where Grace Abounds and the struggle with same sex attractions. At that time WGA was a ministry devoted exclusively to men and women who struggled with unwanted same sex attractions, or the family members of such people.

I was in my early thirties and believed that sexual sin was just a little less horrifying than murder, and that homosexuality was so much worse than “normal” sexual sin. But I had met two young men, one thru my employment and one commuting on the bus, who were two of the most loving and giving men I had ever known. After I had developed good

friendships with them, I found out they were both gay!

I have never questioned whether homosexuality was biblically correct. Yet, the two men I knew did not fit my image of the flamboyant, militant, in-your-face homosexuals I had seen on television talk shows, *mostly because they weren't!* So I had decided just to pursue our friendships and agree to disagree on lifestyles. Sometimes I would question my friendship with them. I asked myself, “Was the reason I did not ‘confront’ them about their homosexuality because I was afraid of losing their friendships,” or was I really showing them God’s love by simply being their friend?

These were not one-sided friendships on my part, I received so much love and support from these two men. Mark would leave miniature orchids (which he grew) on my desk in the mornings and Bret was constantly taking me to lunch. Mark was then diagnosed with AIDS. He was only 25 when he lost his battle

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with AIDS; I was devastated. It was around the time of Mark's death that I heard Scott and Mary speak about ***100% Grace and 100% Truth; No Compromise***. I knew I had found a ministry that confirmed what I believed to be the feelings and conviction of my heart.

Because I was a single mother of 3 and working 40 hours a week, I did not have the time to become involved with any ministry. So I asked to be placed on the mailing list and periodically I managed to give a little financially. Almost before I knew it, time passed and the kids grew and the Lord brought more people into my life involved in homosexuality.

In the meantime, WGA expanded from a ministry devoted exclusively to ministry to those dealing with unwanted same-sex attractions to a ministry offering ministry to survivors of abuse, people addicted to pornography and other sexual behaviors, both heterosexual and homosexual. I read the newsletters and continued to feel

that someday I would like to become really involved with WGA.

At one point, I interviewed with Mary for the position of WGA office manager, but decided I could not afford to take the position because it was only 32 hours a week and offered no benefits. I still had children at home was not in a financial position to take the job at WGA.

***I knew  
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About four years ago, I had a friend at church approach me and ask if I would attend a Thursday night orientation for WGA with her. We went together. She eventually stopped attending, but I became increasingly more involved. My kids were grown, so I

felt I could finally become involved with WGA.

I started volunteering--labeled envelopes at home in the evenings. I would drop them off at the WGA office in the morning on my way to work. When WGA offered a class for people interested in facilitating on Thursday nights, I attended. I started facilitating and

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later was asked to join the leadership team. Mary asked me again if I would be interested in working in the office at WGA, but at that point I was enjoying having a little financial freedom, so I decided I wasn't ready to leave my employment at the bank.

Then about two and a half years ago, Karen Wood announced she was leaving the staff of Where Grace Abounds and my heart jumped. I thought, "Maybe now is the time I can really become involved and join staff." I still had my employment with Vectra Bank and was not sure I wanted to give that up, but then was notified that I was being laid off! I took that as a sign that God had made the deci-

sion for me; I talked to Mary about the staff position. The Board of Directors approved my appointment to staff in February, 2004.

Although I don't always know why God has called me to work in this ministry, I believe with all of my heart that He has. The Lord is good to send encouragement in my times of doubt. Although I do not personally struggle with same sex attractions and have not been physically abused myself, I do know how both affect family, friendships and what we believe about God. I am glad to be a part of God's provision for people who come to Where Grace Abounds! ☆

*(Men Need Church continued from page 2)*

and a strong challenge in order to grow spiritually.

It is my intention to take these questions into WGA staff and prayer meetings, and into my own church leadership meetings. I don't believe that the solution is that all Protestantism must fade away and become clones of our Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters. But I do believe the points Frederica made are valid, and we can learn from her ex-

perience and move closer to God's provision for men and women in His Church.

My prayer is that we will all do so. Will you join me in this prayer? ☆



## May At a Glance

**May 4th:** Mary spoke about the effects of sexual abuse at Hope House

**May 6th:** Roger and Mary did a presentation on homosexuality at Logos Central Chapel

**May 12<sup>th</sup>:** Held 100% Truth: 100% Grace seminar with Frederica Mathewes—Green

**May 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>:** Held Distortion and Reality seminar with Frederica Mathewes—Green

### Thursday Night Group

**May 4th:** 55

**May 11th :** 43

**May 18th:** 42

**May 25th:** 39

**Orientation meeting - 5 new people**

## June And Beyond

**June 3rd:** Intercessory Prayer

**June 16th:** Scott sharing his testimony at Summer Film Series' presentation of *Brokeback Mountain* at Lookout Mountain Community Church

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

**July 5th-8th:** Mary presenting at Quaker Ridge Youth Camp

**July 8th:** Intercessory Prayer

**September TBD:** WGA 20th Celebration Banquet

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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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