



# A Measure of Grace

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## It Hurts to Heal

*by Mary Heathman*

C. S. Lewis in the forward to his book, *The Problem of Pain*, said, "I, like anyone else, would crawl through sewers to avoid pain of any kind." Then he goes on to say how odd it felt to write a book about the benefits of pain.

In one of the WGA Foundations classes, "The Gift That No One Wants," the presenter makes a case for the benefits of pain. It is one of our least popular sessions. It is also frequently quoted when group members share about the most valuable lessons they have learned.

In WGA meetings, the presenters are coming from many different backgrounds, teaching on a variety of topics that all relate to healing of sexual and relational brokenness. We hear about how people's experiences with spiri-

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tual, emotional, psychological, and relational approaches have helped (or hindered)

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1986 - 2006

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them in their pursuit of sexual and relational health.

One recurring theme causes both presenter and listener to flinch and duck for cover—the need to do the grief work. None of us wants to think much about how things often get worse before they get better, or at least seem to. The fear of painful unresolved trauma lurking below the surface of their presenting problem has driven many a man or woman right back into their addiction, or into denial and suppression of their sexuality, rather than face the pain of what needs to be dealt with.

Healing hurts, and at WGA we don't pretend that it doesn't. There is definitely pain involved, often excruciating pain. But as I learned years ago and share with others when they ask, "In this life, we don't get to choose between pain and no pain. Life is difficult and painful. We can medicate pain for a time, but it comes back with a vengeance, requiring more and more of our drug of choice to escape its claws."

No, we don't choose between pain and no pain. Our choice is between two different kinds of pain. One kind is slow growing like [some] cancer and cumulative, consisting of the

pain of unresolved issues, unconfessed sin, unforgiveness or unrecognized disappointment and grief—all ignorable for a season, even many seasons with ever-increasing effort. This is pain that kills us from the inside out if it is allowed to have its way.

The other kind of pain is admittedly sharper, less easily ignored, insistent, and constantly in the forefront. This pain is surgical. In the hands of the

Holy Spirit it probes to our core issues, exposing our sin, opening old wounds that have closed improperly and festered. As we place ourselves into this spiritual surgery process, the Holy Spirit heals us from the inside out.

I believe the choice between the killing kind of pain and the surgical kind is the same sort of choice

the Lord gives us when He says, "I lay before you this day, life and death. Choose life!"

I am often asked, "How long will it take?" I dread the question, because I know the longing behind it. I still ask the question myself; I wish I knew the answer. I would surely not keep it a secret, if I did. I know that it won't last forever, but we aren't promised it won't take a lifetime.

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## Behind Closed Doors: Sally Morgenthau's Story

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*No one knew what was happening at the parsonage.*

**How did you learn your husband's sexual addiction had led him to molest the neighbor's daughter?**

We were on vacation, and the neighbor watching our house called to say he'd picked up a phone message from a detective wanting to speak to my husband. I thought it was so strange, and when I mentioned this to my husband, his face went white.

The day we got back from vacation, the detective called. "Mrs. Morgenthau, we have reason to believe that your husband has been involved in a molestation case with the girl who lives next door. She told her school counselor a few weeks ago. He needs to turn himself in."

I hung up the phone and went to the garage (it was kind of his haven) to tell him the police wanted him.

He minimized his behavior. "Well, something might have happened, but we were just playing together and she must have misunderstood," he said.

Perhaps out of my own denial, I decided to believe him.

**Were there any clues through the years that something was wrong?**

I met my former husband in high school. We were married right after

my senior year of college. He had a conversion experience in his last year in college, and he said God was calling him to seminary.

We were both in our late twenties when he accepted his first church position. We had a young son, and soon afterward our daughter was born.

I certainly had no idea that he had developed a secret addiction to pornography (he'd been introduced by a relative at the age of 12 or 13). I did know early on in our marriage that something was not quite right. Our relationship was strained and distant. He worked long hours, which is not unusual in the ministry. However, after a few years, both I and the office staff began having problems finding him during the day. Later I would wake up the middle of the night, and he would be gone. Sometimes he was in the garage or on the back porch.

**What was happening during this time in the church?**

The cracks started to show. After six years at his first congregation, he started a mission church, and I was the worship coordinator.

He visited several mega churches and became consumed with the dream of building a large church. He pressed

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## Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

*By Nancy Hicks*

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### Freedom in Christ Part 2.5: What freedom is not

We've been discussing a few of the aspects of freedom in Christ for the past two months. We've explored the idea through Scripture that we are freed through Jesus from the power of the fear of death and the tyranny of sin. These are freedoms that we have to continue to choose and to believe. We can now choose to listen to the voice of truth that offers grace and does not condemn. But now what? If we stop here, we are left standing outside of the penitentiary on parole day with our cheap suit, \$100 and a suitcase saying, "What do I do now?"

As I read earlier Paul says Gal. 5:1 "Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you."\* This implies that freedom continues to be a choice. Freedom is something we use and maintain. Freedom that says "I can do anything I want to now" will not be freedom for long. Yes, I am loved by God unconditionally. Yes, His Grace continues to cover me and extend mercy to me. But shall we continue to sin that grace may abound!! May it never be!

Paul says it this way in Romans 6:15-18 "So, since we're out from under the old tyranny, does that mean we can live any old way we want? Since we're free in the freedom of God, can we do anything that comes to mind? Hardly. You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do. But thank God you've started listening to a new master, one whose commands set you free to live openly in his freedom."

So this freedom is not intended to be a cutting loose to run willy-nilly with every change of the winds of desire. Freedom itself has necessary boundaries.

The prodigal son gives us a good picture of freedom gone bad. He takes his rightful inheritance, leaves the chores, responsibilities and relationships behind and heads out to enjoy his "freedom." He soon discovers himself at the mercy of a pig-owner (a pretty despicable place for a Jew) fighting pigs for food. Many cancers

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give us a good picture of freedom gone bad as well. Cells divide, multiple, grow with complete freedom, with complete lack of restraint, with complete lack of regard for the proper functioning of the entire body. The end is often death.

So this is a big question: What are we to do with our freedom? What are we free TO?  
Stay tuned.

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

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But we **are** promised that we don't have to go through it alone. The Lord Himself will never leave nor forsake us. And there are many brothers and sisters in Christ who walk the healing path and are glad to have our company. WGA group members are one band of fellow sojourners helping each other work out our issues. We don't avoid the hard work; we know healing hurts. But we also know there is life to be lived and joy in the journey as we travel along! I pray that every seeker finds such a community of people committed to becoming all that God created us to be, and finds there the ultimate antidote to pain, the mystery of life—Christ in us the hope of Glory! Lord, may it be so!

#### Warning! Buried Grief

Fifty years ago industrialists thought they could just bury toxic waste and it would go away. We have since learned it doesn't just go away. It makes trouble. It leaks into the water table, contaminates crops, and kills animals. Buried grief does the same thing. Raw time doesn't heal a thing. Buried pain leaks into our emotional system and wreaks havoc there. It distorts our perceptions of life, and it taints our relationships. That contamination happens subconsciously.

Bill Hybels, "A Better Kind of Grieving," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 108.

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this model on people, leading to conflict after conflict.

At first he'd gotten a lot of kudos for being a personal, compassionate pastor. He was the one that people could call on—a people pleaser, and he got much of his identity from being the man who would be there for people, day or night.

But a distance grew between him and the congregation—absences, forgotten appointments, capriciousness on decisions, increasing focus on power and control, inability to follow through. An addiction takes time and energy. It consumes big chunks of brainpower. It's a vicious circle: as more things went wrong in the ministry, he slipped deeper into his addictive cycle.

**What about your marriage?**

My life became all about rescuing him from himself and holding our family life together. I became a co-dependent. I tried to hide his behavior while suffering (with our children) its daily consequences. I just kept the plates twirling.

**What happened when you found the pornography?**

When I found him with the first magazines, ten years into our marriage, I was—I was incredulous. It was decimating to me as a woman, as his wife, to think for the first time that *I wasn't enough*. It wasn't till years later that I learned his addiction had nothing to do with me. It had to do with an untreated behavioral disorder he'd developed long before we met.

**Was pornography a "gateway drug" for him? The first step on the downward slope?**

Yes. Three years after his conviction I finally learned his whole sexual history: from print to peeping to sexual encounters with adults to exposing himself in public places.

Then finally, he had repeated sexual contact with my daughter's best friend, a girl who was retarded. Over a two-year period, while I was away from the house, he fondled her approximately fifty times.

**Then the detective called.**

I hired a high-priced attorney to make sure he didn't get arrested. At first I thought he was innocent. Protecting him and proving his innocence was my goal. I didn't want to subject my children to the shame.

He had left the church a few months earlier, and we were starting our own business.

A year after the start of the investigation, he was convicted and put on probation. But while he wasn't molesting anyone else, via polygraph tests, he admitted developing a fantasy life about our daughter. She was 13 at the time.

Finally he re-offended by exposing himself in a public place. He was sentenced to a year in jail and eight years in a halfway house and an intensive sex-offender program.

**How was your spiritual life during that time?**

Oh, it hit some real lows. I kept asking the "God, are you still there? Do you still love me?" questions. I re-

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member sitting in the waiting room at the jail, watching all these women I had so little in common with, except our offender husbands and boy-friends, and wondering, *God, where are you?*

The lowest moment was the day probation officers had me read his sexual history from about age eight. His history included things I had never known—affairs, risky behavior. It was like reading about a stranger. Nothing about our marriage relationship had been true.

That night I called a suicide hotline. I had sent my daughter up the street to a friend's house, because the next day I was ready to commit suicide. I didn't, because of God's still small voice drawing me and helping me to see that, though I felt I was nothing, I was all these children had. If I couldn't save myself for myself, God had given me these beautiful children, and that was a calling. God drew me out of that horrible dark place with that calling.

While I felt God was near, I didn't necessarily know that he loved me.

**When did you regain the sense of God's love?**

I filed for divorce after my husband was released from jail and began his time in the halfway house (2000). My children and I began the long journey into hope. We had the ability to choose a new kind of future. My son had been strong through it all. He graduated from college in 2002 and has established himself as a film editor. My daughter had some rough

years, but by God's grace, her life turned around. She is graduating college next spring, and she is engaged to a wonderful young man.

God has blessed us in so many ways, and all of our needs have been met. Every one of them. God has redeemed the years the locusts had eaten.

**How has this experience changed your ministry—your view of yourself and of God?**

No question, I was humbled and leveled. I have often wondered why people, especially those between 18 and 30, are so drawn to who I am and what I do. It can't be explained by my views about worship, leadership, or the church.

I've come to believe that they're drawn by God's humbling process in my life. My vulnerability has been pretty clear.

**How has this it affected your view of worship?**

At its foundation, worship is real people meeting a real God, not a patty-cake rehearsal. Where are the psalms of lament, of confession? Is it more than "nice"?

I have experienced God's presence through what seemed like hell, like darkness that was outside of God's reach. But like the psalmist in Psalm 139, I've learned God is there. Always. Life happens, and come what may, God is in the midst of it.

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## June At a Glance

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

**June 22nd:** Scott presented to chaplains at Swedish Hospital

**June 22nd:** Mary presented to the Denver Women's Leadership Forum

**June 25th:** WGA staff presented at Wabash Friends Church in Wabash, Indiana

**June 27th—July 2nd:** Mary, Roger, Scott and Pat attended the Exodus International Conference at Indiana Wesleyan University

## July And Beyond

**July 9th—11th:** Mary presenting at Quaker Ridge Youth Camp

**July 7th:** Men's event—Rockies Game

**July 8th:** Intercessory Prayer

**August 3-5th:** Mary will be participating in the Iowa Meetings of Friends

**September 23rd:** WGA 20th Anniversary Celebration Banquet at the Hyatt Regency DTC.

**October 8th:** WGA presenting at First Denver Friends Church

### Thursday Night Group

**June 1st:** 53 people

**June 8th:** 43 people

**June 15th:** 38 people

**June 22nd:** 45 people

**June 29th:** No Group

**Orientation meeting:** 3 new people

### WGA Staff

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*A Measure of Grace*  
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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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