



A Measure of Grace

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1986 - 2006
20
YEARS
WHERE
GRACE
ABOUNDS

WGA and Kids *By Mary Heathman*

It occurred to me recently that our readers may not know that WGA provides support and resources for youth and their families. When the ministry was first founded, with about twelve men and women attending our support group, there were no teens on the scene. But it didn't take long before the opportunities started coming our way to: speak at a youth group, answer a parent's questions, help a youth pastor prepare his/her lesson on healthy sexuality.

We still don't work with young people in a group setting; but with parental permission, we will meet with them and provide support for their struggle with sexual feelings that threaten to overpower them. A young girl often needs no more than a reasonable

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wga

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explanation for why she is attracted the way she is to abusive boys, or other unhealthy relationships. It is encouraging to a twelve year old boy to hear the story of a WGA staff member and get some pointers on how to pry himself away from the pornography he has been viewing on the internet. Youth sponsors and parents seek resources and advice on how to help young people grow into healthy adults who have the skills to manage their sexuality and relationships with integrity.

The need for such ministry is growing exponentially. It used to be rare to hear from a teenager; now we seem to average a couple of sessions a month with a boy or girl and their parents.

The challenge facing our middle school and high school students is immense. They are navigating the rough waters of puberty in a highly sexualized culture. There are Gay/Straight Alliance clubs in their schools that affirm homosexual behavior as good and right. Music and television programs

portray immorality as normal and abstinence as ridiculous, if not outright weird.

Yet young people know it when their sexual feelings are askew. I remember one young girl telling me during a phone conversation, “My teacher says it’s okay to have sex if I want to; but inside I know it’s too soon for me. I just don’t feel right about it. But I really want to make my boyfriend happy! I’m afraid I’ll lose him if I don’t do it.”

I remember feeling that way when I was thirteen. But I didn’t have anybody (that I knew of) to talk with. I just fought down the doubts and kept dancing closer and closer to the edge with my boyfriends. I remember the first time I “went all the way.” I hid it well, but my heart felt like something was broken that couldn’t be fixed. And then I made a bad assumption—“now that I have done this, I just have to keep on.” I was twenty-seven years old before I let myself face the truth about how empty and used up I felt.

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Despite the latest in filters, children can still find everything on the internet, from nudity to sites featuring violent sex acts.

"Kids are exposed to pornography at incredibly early ages, when their brains are going through profound developmental changes," says Philadelphia psychologist Michael Bradley. "This has caught parents off guard. (Porn) has always been there, but it's always been in a lower volume." In recent years, he says, "It's been like a tidal wave that has swept over kids."

Questions emerged with the news that search giant Google is fighting a Justice Department subpoena for its search data. The case is part of the Bush administration's legal fight to defend the polarizing Child Online Protection Act of 1998. The measure would make it a federal crime for a commercial website to put up materials "harmful to minors" unless

Kids Have Porn Access

placed in areas only accessible to adults.

Regardless of where they stand on the law, experts agree that parents need to take matters into their own hands by using content filters, monitoring their children's use of the internet and, most importantly, talking with their children about online pornography.

"You have to sit down with kids at ages 6, 7, 8 and start to inoculate them against this insanity by having these awkward conversations about what they might see," Bradley says. "Parents have to get to these kids first—not last."

—*from USA Today*

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Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

Freedom in Christ Part 3

We've been talking about our freedom in Christ. When we really understand the things that Christ has freed us FROM—fear of death & slavery to sin—our natural response is gratitude. But I believe it is what Christ has freed us TO that gives us the vision and the tools to walk in this new freedom.

A few months ago I described the slave master we have been freed FROM with his whips and fists and the threat of death. Now, let's imagine another figure who represents what we are freed to—a good father, a loving father the way a father was meant to be. He is all about helping his child to reach her full potential—talents, skills, dreams—all free to be pursued and enjoyed. His constant question is: What is the best thing I can give or do or limit for my son? How can I help my daughter to remove the obstacles in her character, her schedule, her understanding that might block her being able to live her life fully?

With this new image, we can understand that we have been freed TO have unhindered relationship with our Heavenly Father. Romans 8:15

& 16 says, “The resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike ‘What's next, Papa?’ God's spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children.” And then in Hebrews 10:19 & 20 it says, “So, friends, we can now—without hesitation—walk right up to God, into ‘the Holy Place.’ Jesus has cleared the way by the blood of his sacrifice, acting as our priest before God.”

We are free to say to God, “Abba, Dad, I'm really struggling with this sexual addiction. I'm discouraged, I hate myself for it. I know that you want to help me figure this out so that I'm as free as you intended me to be. Talk with me about this. Bring the people and the ideas and the situations that will help me to see what I need to see and understand what I need to understand.”

We are free to say to God, “Abba, Dad, I'm embarrassed and angry about the things that my daughter has been doing. I alternately feel guilty and confused and furious

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about all of this. Help me to know that you love me and don't hold anything against me. Help me to navigate my emotions about all of this and bring me the people and the ideas and the situations that will help me to see what I need to see and understand what I need to understand."

This is good news! The all powerful God, interacting as a loving Father will help!

Now the reality is that there are many of you (us) who are reading this saying, "Blah, blah, blah. Regardless of what is TRUE, my experience is that I'm a slave to my sin and I'm afraid of death." Let me be quick to reassure you that this identity shift from slave to son, or daughter is not an easy, overnight transformation. For example, if I move to England and start driving on "the wrong side of the road" after a life-time of driving on the right side of the road here in the States, I will not "feel" accustomed to this new reality for quite some time.

So our quest is to do the things that are son & daughter-like, not slave-like—acting on what we know to be true even when it conflicts with what feels familiar:

A slave hides his actions because he fears there is no solution.

A son confesses his actions because he trusts the wisdom of his Father.

A slave lies about what she has done because she is afraid of the fist.

A daughter is truthful about them because she trusts that the hands of her Father are just and merciful.

A slave covers his actions up for dear-life, because he is afraid of losing his life.

A son reveals them because he believes that is the way to more life.

We practice obedience and son & daughter-like actions in spite of the fact that they don't feel familiar. And as love is perfected it casts out fear.

We are free to have unhindered relationship with our Ultimate Father, who loves us and has plans of goodness and not calamity to give us a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11). ☆



**It all started with
a cup of coffee . . .**

Celebrate 20 years of Ministry with us!

Saturday, September 23, 2006
5:30pm
Hyatt Regency, Denver Tech Center

Dress: Semi Formal
\$50 per person

Included in the evening are dinner, silent auction,
entertainment, and the opportunity to invest in the next
20 years of Where Grace Abounds.

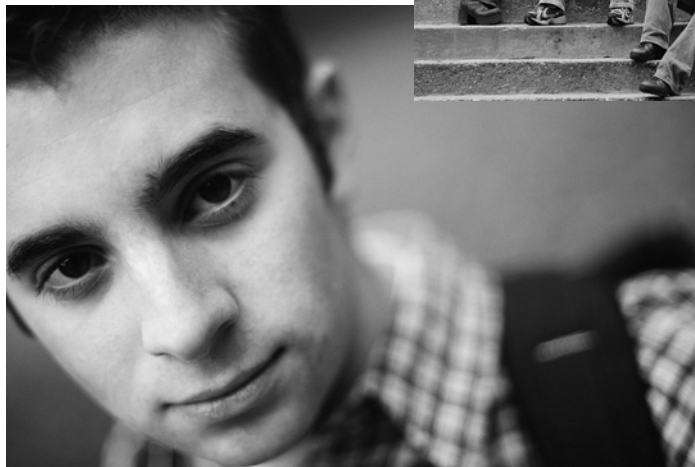
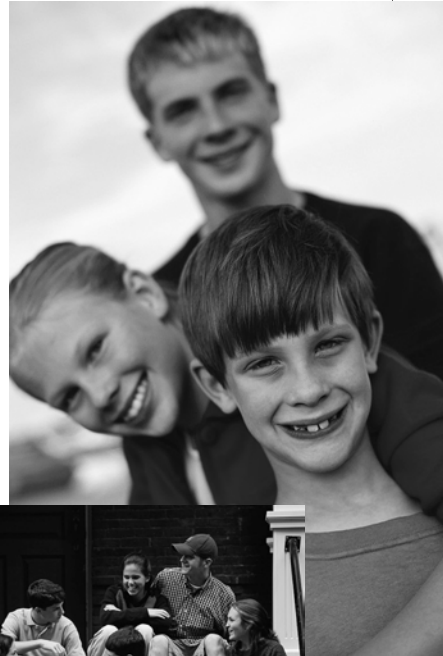
We have much to celebrate!

Please contact the WGA Office for additional information.
(303) 863-7757

RSVP required by August 25th 2006.

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It would be great if WGA could have a part in preventing youth from spending themselves like I did when I was their age. So, I am excited about the increase in calls WGA is getting for ministry to youth. We look forward to being a part of God's provision for teens looking for alternatives to the vision cast for them in their culture. We are glad to be the behind the scenes support for these young people, their families and churches. WGA is committed to be here, bolster their courage, provide answers to their questions, and battle the enemy on their behalf. And we are privileged and grateful to do so! ☆





July At a Glance

July 9th–11th: Mary presented at Quaker Ridge Youth Camp

July 7th: Men's event—Rockies Game

June 27-July 2nd: The WGA staff and a number of group participants attended the annual Exodus Conference

July 22nd: WGA 20th Anniversary Alumni Picnic

July 25th: Mary spoke at Poiema, a local Exodus ministry

July 27th: Mary spoke at Hope House

Thursday Night Group

July 6th: 52
July 13th : 44
July 20th: 47
July 27th: 49

Orientation meeting - 9 new people

August And Beyond

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

August 5th: Intercessory Prayer

August 10–12: Mary will be participating in the Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting of Friends

September 2nd: Intercessory Prayer

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

October 8th: WGA presenting at First Denver Friends Church

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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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