



A Measure of Grace

December 2006
Volume 10, Issue 12

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

Mountains Move

by Mary Heathman

A personal favorite type of public-television program is the musical/biographical history of an artist from the past. I enjoy these performances of songwriter/musicians who were popular when “who was popular” was still *very* important to me. The biographical information makes my memories richer. Often, as the first line is sung of an old favorite, memories and emotions come flooding to mind and heart. Whether the memory is bitter or sweet, it seems important occasionally to revisit my earlier years from today’s vantage point.

Today, I watched a program about Marty Robbins, a versatile songwriter and singer

Inside this issue:

Mountains Move	1
Healing through Honesty	3
Advent Prayer	5
November Activities	8
December & Beyond	8

who was one of the first to crossover from country music

(Continued on page 2)



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

(Mountains Move continued from page 1)

to the popular charts. He was also the first artist to use a fuzzy electric guitar sound on one of his tracks—it was an accident, an amplifier tube blew, but he liked the sound and left it in, pioneering the way for other “alternative” music. Another music pioneering fact is: Marty Robbins was the first in his era to write the legend or story songs, like *Fareena*, about a cowboy in west Texas who “fell in love with a Mexican maiden” and finally came to his end as he made his way through a barrage of bullets, one that he “felt go deep in his chest.” (But he did make it to Fareena’s cantina and died in her arms.)

Many artists followed suit. A vivid memory comes to mind from 1960, in Junction City, Kansas. I was sitting with friends listening to the radio in my boyfriend’s dad’s ’59 Chevy at the A&W drive-in. One girl hushed us, “Listen to this. . . it’s sooooo sad!” The boy was singing about how he pulled his *Teen Angel* to safety when their car stalled on the railroad track, but “you went running back . . . They said they found my high school ring

clutched in your fingers tight.”

Anyway, back to Marty Robbins, and more importantly, to a point that I hope to make eventually! In the summer of 1982, I drove out of a diner’s parking lot, only to make it a few blocks up Speer Boulevard toward the Highlands in North Denver. When I left the restaurant, I was numb. I was thinking hard, trying to get my mind around what my step-son had said to me toward the end of our lunch, “Mary, I’m gay, I want to live my life as a gay man, and I want you to be happy for me.” I was paralyzed in the face of my son’s situation.

The song playing on the radio was one written by Marty Robbins,

This Time You Gave Me A Mountain, © '66 Mariposa Music, BMI / Unichappell Music, BMI

Born in the heat of the desert
My mother died giving me life
Despised and disliked by my
father
Blamed for the loss of his wife
You know Lord I've been to a
prison
For something that I'd never

(Continued on page 6)

When I left the restaurant, I was numb. I was thinking hard, trying to get my mind around what my step-son had said to me toward the end of our lunch...

Healing Through Honesty

By Karen Wood

Director's Note: *Former staff member, Karen Wood, has left a lasting legacy with WGA through her writing. While on staff, Karen wrote a series of papers on honesty. She organized these essays into five booklets, each discussing a different way we must be honest in order to grow spiritually and relationally. The series is called, Going Deeper With God. Each fall since they were written, these booklets are studied by a few WGA group members who seek a deeper relationship with God. We are currently in the middle of this year's study. As I lead the discussion each week, I am impressed again with Karen's creative way of expressing her thoughts, and the way the Lord uses her material. One excerpt from our reading this week seems particularly timely to me and I wanted to share it with our readers. As you read, I hope you will also pray for the men and women in our study group, and for Karen in life in a monastic order.*

From Booklet Three—Emotional Honesty:

When I face the reality of the condition of my life, I can respond in one of three ways. If I discover I have cancer, I can deny it. I can simply pretend I am well until I die. If I have cancer, I won't be healed by leaving that fact out and simply embracing health as a concept.

A second option is to acknowledge my cancer, but to give in to it. In this case, I will die of cancer because I surrender to the illness and don't fight it. I won't be healed if I accept the fact that I have cancer and don't do anything about it. I will, instead, identify with the cancer and let it take over who I am.

Thirdly, though, I can acknowledge my illness and apply the concepts of health to that illness. I can respond to my awareness of my illness with healthy ways of living and medicine that can overcome the disease. I can bring who I am as a sick person in contact with that which can produce health. The two must come together, my sickness and what God

(Continued on page 4)

(Honesty continued from page 3)

has provided for health, for the transfer of health to be made. Similarly, miracle of miracles, when I bring my sickness of soul to God and lay it on the altar of his provision, he takes on my sickness and infuses me with his health.

Option three leads to life. I acknowledge the presence of death in me, and bring it to God. I acknowledge God, but don't disregard my condition in the process. I acknowledge the truth of who God is in all his unreachable, unfathomable, even terrifying perfection, and also the truth of his utter self-giving love that has paved the way for my return to health and to relationship with him. I also acknowledge who I am, both as a creation of God, made "very good" and destined by God for life, and as a creation broken and destined for death by my buy-in to the enemy's false system. I begin to dare to be honest, to peek out of my illusory world, to face reality.

Honesty is a requirement for reality. Why is simple. If we are not being honest, we are not living in reality. It seems like it should be simple to be honest. But it's not. When we have been caught in the lie and have become defined by it, to embrace the truth means dying

to what we thought was real. It is a crucifixion. Every step of honesty, in looking at the lie that we have considered our being, feels like another nail hanging us on our cross. And it is. We must die to the lie, and be born again to the truth. The Bible repeatedly speaks of endurance, saying he who endures to the end will be saved. Endures to the end of what? We need to endure to the end of the lie's hold on us that has been killing us. Jesus came to set us free from the lie by the truth. He is the Truth.

This involves a process of holding still and of waiting while Christ infuses us with Reality. It also involves a draining out of us of our sense of who we thought we were. It is like the exchange of fluids in a plant, as the life from the vine flows to the branches, and the fluids from the branches flow to the vine. To us, it feels like who we are is being drained out of us, and what we don't know anything about is entering us. It is scary; hence, the need for courage to be honest. We wait for the transfer to be complete. And we wrestle with God as we are also honest about how we are affected by all this, and about the beliefs and feelings which are being challenged and stirred up in us. ☆

Advent Prayer

Henri J.M. Nouwen

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

Amen.



(Mountains Move *continued from page 2*)

done
It's been one hill after another
And I've climbed them, Lord,
one by one

But this time you gave me a
mountain
A mountain I may never climb
It isn't a hill any longer
You gave me a mountain this
time

It was the lines, “this time you gave me a mountain; a mountain I may never climb” that triggered my emotion. Blinded by a gush of tears, I pulled into a motel parking lot. As the song played on, my own personal “one hill after another” went through my mind, and I faced my own reality: this time it wasn’t a hill; this time it was a mountain too big. I had no hope I could ever get on top of it.

I cried for a long time, not because my step-son was gay—I hadn’t yet a clue what that involved. No, it wasn’t because my son wanted to embrace his homosexuality that I was so crushed. It was because I thought I knew him and now he seemed a stranger. It

was because he had grappled with his feelings ever since he could remember, and had just now told me. The thought of his isolation and pain all those years broke my heart. And there were tears of self-pity because I didn’t want to be the one to tell his dad, or the other children. . . .and then I wept at the thought of the children at church who considered him their hero, the puppeteer who entertained and taught them gospel stories. And I cried because I was confused, scared of the unknown, and terrified of what little I did know.

As I write these words twenty years later, the emotion seems distant, as from another life entirely. I often revisit the pain when I listen to and talk with a parent or a spouse in crisis. But mostly, I am not personally in pain over it anymore. The wound has healed.

From pain so deep I thought I would never heal, a joy in life returned—gradually, not without setbacks along the way, but I have found joy in the journey again. From confusion so dark I couldn’t find enough light for the next step,

(Continued on page 7)

***The
thought
of his
isolation
and pain
all those
years broke
my heart.***

(Mountains Move continued from page 6)

resources came my way to guide and direct my education about sexuality and relationships—there is now always light enough to take a day's steps at a time.

From self-pity, through grief and loss, and finally to resolution—the Lord's grace has been sufficient, just as He promised! The mountain I thought I would never climb just isn't there anymore. I don't remember climbing it, though I am aware of having worked very hard sometimes, just to hang on as the Lord whisked me through some fast and furious seasons.

Come to think of it, I don't think I **did** climb the mountain; I think the Lord shoveled it out from un-

der me! In any case, that particular mountain is gone, and I am grateful. Of course, there are other mountains on the horizon. As a matter of fact, the walk in His Spirit is a rather mountainous journey, I think. I am *so* grateful we don't have to walk it alone.

The Lord is with us; His grace is sufficient to meet all our needs; His steadfast love is new every morning. And, in Him, we have each other. What a blessing we can be to one another, what comfort, strength, and peace there can be in shared tribulations and joys.
☆

May the Lord's presence be felt by each of you, our friends, supporters and fellow sojourners!





November **At a Glance**

November 5th: Scott presented at the Ethiopian Evangelical Church and Aurora

November 17-21: Mary presented at the 7th Friends Ministers Conference in San Antonio

Thursday Night Group

November 2nd: 48

November 9th: 43

November 16th: 47

November 23rd: No Group

November 30th: 48

Orientation meeting - 6 new people

December **And Beyond**

December 2nd: Intercessory Prayer: Join us from 7:00—9:00 am at the WGA offices

December 3rd: Mary will be presenting at First Friends Church in Colorado Springs

December 10th: WGA is participating in a Missions Fair at Peterson Air Force base in Colorado Springs

January 4th: Scott Kingry will be speaking at Denver Seminary

January 5-7th: Men's Commitment Group and Survivors of Abuse Group begin this weekend. Please pray for those participating!

January 30-February 2: Exodus Leaders' Conference in Orlando

March 23-25, 2007: Family and Friends Retreat

WGA Staff

Mary Heathman
Executive Director

Scott Kingry
Program Director

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