



A Measure of Grace

March 2007
Volume 11, Issue 3

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

The Need for WGA

by Mary Heathman

WGA is a ministry that exists to guide and support men and women who seek to understand sexuality and relationship. . . . What do we see in our society, in our churches, or both, that points to a need for a ministry that specializes in these areas?

In preparation for writing this article, I did an internet search using two key words, "Sex," and "News." The search engine turned up 218 million sites. When I added another word, "Headlines," the sites narrowed to just under 6 million. The first several sites on the list included clipping services that list articles about sex in the news. A quick look at those sites are enough to overwhelm one with the reality of sexuality gone awry in our society, and within the Church as well.

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In just the past
twenty-four hours,
news stories were
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posted about :

- A sophisticated prostitution ring where teen girls were drugged and sold for sex
- A church's financial problems in the aftermath of a lead pastor's homosexual immorality
- An analysis of the problem of offenders not signing in on the sex offender registry
- A police officer who was accused of sexual impropriety with interns
- A church that was trying to develop guidelines for allowing convicted sex offenders to worship with them
- A book review, *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love, and Lose at Both*
- A state's Youth Commission riddled with scandal about leaders' sexual misbehavior with its interns
- A drill sergeant who was accused **again** of sexual crimes against soldiers in his company
- The Worldwide Anglican Communion reporting a "lack of real theological discussion" about sexual issues like homosexuality
- An increase in sexual assaults on college campuses

It doesn't take much of a look to

find an answer to the questions, "Is there a need for something different in our approach to human sexuality?" "Is illicit sexual behavior a problem in our society and within our churches?"

Few would deny that illegal sexual behavior is a problem. But in discussions about how to address it, there is often a tremendous resistance when it comes to moving beyond sexual abuse of children, prostitution, the containment of sex offenders, and other such illegal activity to their pre-cursor —rampant expression of sexuality contrary to biblical standards.

The general public is outraged and demands more and more protection against sexually motivated crimes, while at the same time viewing abstinence or biblical standards for morality as archaic, irrelevant, and oppressive. We see this dissonance all the time; in fact, we are often oblivious to it, because it is so common.

For example, a few months ago, the front page article of the Glendale paper detailed the thorough and heroic efforts of its detectives in exposing a prostitution ring that was operating out of a high end apartment building. The reporter told of how wide-spread the activity was and described how the Glendale

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Remembering the Stutterer

*By Michael Spencer
(Reprinted with permission)*

Part one of 2

When I was a child and a teenager, I stuttered. For several years, quite badly. Those who know me will notice that I can still get into some stuttering patterns when I'm nervous or stressed, but for the most part, my stuttering left me around age 15 when I started preaching regularly.

There are different kinds of stuttering. Mine was a primarily a problem with certain hard sounds. Dad told me that he first noticed I couldn't say "Alice," but just froze up on the hard "a" sound. I've been avoiding those hard "A's" ever since. Some of you could compose a sentence to torture me and put it in the comments if you like.

I had other kinds of stuttering patterns, including halting, lots of "uh's," (Hi Phil!) and repeating certain words. There's nothing more fun than wanting to talk to a girl and getting stuck repeating the word "You" over and over. "You you you you you you look really nice." Kind of takes the blush off the rose. If her name was Alice, it could turn into a real circus.

When I was in middle school, an observant and caring teacher finally tried to get me into speech therapy. A nice lady came by my class and asked me to stay after school to see the speech therapist. I didn't stay- having more important things to do and not knowing what that was anyway- and may have suffered for a few more years as a result.

I have a memory of being in front of an elementary class giving a report, and stuttering very badly; so badly that time went on and on and the teacher finally had to cut my report short. Apparently, unlike some kids, stuttering didn't have much of an effect on what I attempted to do in front of others. I tried out for plays and wondered why I didn't get the lead. When I first began talking in front of groups of people in churches, I was still a stutterer, but by God's grace, the more speaking I did, the less I stuttered.

Today, if you listen to me preach a typical message, you'd never guess that 35 years ago I sometimes couldn't say a sentence without stuttering badly.

I have friends who stutter. One friend from college days got a master's in speech therapy....and still stuttered

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Reflections: Thoughts from a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks



Forgiveness is being willing to bear the consequences of someone else's sin in my life without being angry, bitter, resentful or vengeful.¹

Forgiveness is many things, of course, but this partial definition has been working on me for some time. When someone wrongs me, they create some level of chaos and pain in my life. I can choose to carry unforgiveness (expressed in bitterness, anger, resentment, revenge, etc.) AND try to cope with the consequences of what they have done in my life. OR I can forgive them by letting go of the unforgiveness and putting my energies into bearing the consequences of what is already in place in my life. This is clearly easier said than done.

I was ruminating on this idea in regards to those who have sinned against my children (my most difficult area of forgiveness) one morning last week. As I was working hard to pray a blessing and mean it towards those who have harmed our family, a still,

small voice said, "Will you forgive Me?" I was shocked to my toes. Forgive God? God can't sin. He can't do anything wrong. But as the question penetrated my heart, I realized that I deeply believed that He was wrong to allow some of the experiences my children have had to endure.

This reflects my belief that all things come to us through God's hand and His permission. We hear a lot about the blessings God lavishes on us, but not so much about the difficulties that also come with His permission. He allowed Satan to torment Job (1:12; 2:4-6); He allowed Peter to be "sifted like wheat" (Luke 22:31&32); Ezekiel is full of God's unflinching affirmation that He would be the one to bring judgment on Israel through famine, wild beasts, disease and war. And He allowed His own Son to be limited by a human body, scorned, tortured and killed. I'm simplifying a complex topic here because human sin and personal responsibility are factors in the mix, but I can't get away from God's sovereignty over all.

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My theology tells me that God is not wrong. But the emotion I have carried about some of these events tells a different story about what I truly believe. So I find myself asking, “Am I willing to bear the consequences of God’s action/inaction in my life without being angry, bitter, resentful or vengeful?”

I find strength to enter into this soul struggle when I read similar words from fellow saints: James² – 1:2 “Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges

come at you from all sides”; Peter – 1Pet 4:12 “Friends, when life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job”; and finally, Jesus Himself praying in Luke 22,

*Father, remove this cup from me.
But please, not what I want. What
do you want?*

¹This is a paraphrase of a statement out of Neil Anderson’s “Freedom in Christ” workbook.

²All Scripture quotes are from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson.



Save the Date!

Open House

**Roger Jones will become our new
Executive Director when he returns from his sabbatical in April.
Please come meet Roger and celebrate his new
position at WGA!**

Date: Sunday, April 22nd

Time: 1:00 to 4:00 PM

Place: The WGA offices, 1532 Emerson St, Denver

Call 303-863-7757 if you need directions!

P.S. And, while you are standing in line to celebrate Roger, you can also celebrate Mary in her new role as Founding Director, or celebrate Scott in his continued role as program director. We all look forward to seeing you there.

(Stutterer continued from page 3)

so badly that when he called me on the phone, there was no sound at all. It took my dad a while to realize he wasn't getting some kind of freaky obscene call.

Some of my students stutter. One young man was obviously nervous about doing an oral presentation of a Shakespeare sonnet. He decided to perform the sonnet in a faux British accent and delivered it perfectly. Like a lot of us, he's discovering that various kinds of speech patterns go through different routes of the brain and can avoid stuttering completely. Many of us learned this from watching stuttering country music star Mel Tillis sing.

I've learned some things from being part of the stuttering community.

1. I've learned what it's like to have your imperfections unavoidably noticeable.

Human flaws are a mixture of the public and the private. Increasingly, our American culture is about the quest to present a perfect public image. We'll pay thousands of dollars for perfect bodies, teeth, hair, clothes, cars, resumes, etc.

If you open you mouth and repeat the word "you" ten times, however, it tends to spoil that image. There you are- a person who can't talk. How do you like me now? And, of course, in many cases you know that you are going to be disliked, thought unintel-

ligent and passed over for opportunities.

Our natural tendency is to hide our flaws. Some of us can't. We need to come to a place of peace and acceptance about that, and move on to what God has in our future.

2. I've learned what it's like to live with a problem for a lifetime.

My stuttering almost vanished in my teenage years, but it's still enough a part of my life that I understand how each of us are presented with choices about how we are going to live with our problems. Some of us will be called to live with imperfections and flaws that won't go away and won't get better. Will these things define us? Will they defeat us in the journey to have a meaningful life? Will we allow the perceptions of others to become our self-perceptions?

Our imperfections can become the occasion to rely more on the grace of God than other people. Remember Jesus' words to Paul about his "thorn." "My grace is sufficient for you." Paul said his "thorn" was sent by God to keep him from becoming arrogant. God put it there so that Paul wouldn't see himself apart from God's grace and power. He learned to see that his weakness was a manifestation of God's strength IN weakness.

To be continued next month

(The Need for WGA continued from page 2)

detectives ran a sophisticated sting operation to bring it down. The message was clear; the entire tone was celebratory, “Wasn’t it great that Glendale had such a big part in ridding our region of such a problem?”

But right next to this story, the paper ran an ad for a local club known for its “exotic dancers.” The ad copy was clearly intended to incite sexual interest.

In the Church the dissonance is different, but just as real. In the midst of the culture I have just described, and periodic eruptions in the media about sexual sin among Christian leaders, there seems to be a resistance to discussing sexuality in redemptive and constructive ways. There is great distress among believers over the sexual immorality in our society, yet statistics show that sexual impropriety among believers is almost as prevalent as among the population at large. Josh McDowell has said that “Christian teenagers are sexually active in the same percentages as the national average.” Focus on the Family’s H.B. London’s poll of pastors a few years ago revealed that “Christian

men, even pastors, are as likely as non-Christians to act out sexually against God’s directives.” It is well known among booksellers that romance novels (the female’s sex-drug of choice) outsell almost all other genres by far.

The need is overwhelming. It is my firm conviction that the Church cannot fulfill its call to be salt and

light in our world while so many brothers and sisters are entangled in sexual darkness. We need people who are called by His name to humble themselves, pray, and experience healing in their sexuality and relationships. We need such people to bring a prophetic voice into the Church and into our culture with a call to repentance

over sexual sin, a call to holiness, and to the restoration of God’s original intent for sexuality.

It is my hope and prayer that Where Grace Abounds is a rooting and grounding place for such people. Our goal is to offer a place first to heal, then to be sent by God to the Church and to our society as missionaries to the sexually broken. Our message is the good news of God’s grace and truth, His forgiveness and restoration, His peace. ☆

It is my firm conviction that the Church cannot fulfill its call to be salt and light in our world while so many brothers and sisters are entangled in sexual darkness themselves.



February At a Glance

February 8th: Mary attended Denver Women's Leadership Forum luncheon

February 18th: Mary spoke at Arvada Covenant Church Mission Emphasis

Thursday Night Group

February 1st: 20

February 8th: 44

February 15th: 33

February 22nd: 49

Orientation: 3 new people

March And Beyond

March 3rd: Intercessory Prayer: Join us from 7:00—9:00 am at the WGA offices

March 4th: Scott and Mary will be speaking at Ascension Lutheran Church

March 23-25, 2007: Family and Friends Retreat

April 15th, 22nd and 29th: Mary and Scott presenting to Corona Presbyterian Church youth.

April 22nd: Open House at the WGA offices; celebrate the changing roles of the staff.

June 26th—July 1st: Exodus International Conference—Irvine, CA

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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.

Printed in the USA
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