



April 2007  
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# A Measure of Grace

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

## WGA's Place

by Mary Heathman

In the February issue, the first of a series of articles spelled out my intent to offer “perspective on the need for WGA, its place in the Body of Christ, and how we minister in our little corner of the kingdom.” The need for a series such as this is apparent through the questions we are asked when we present our mission at churches and Sunday Schools. As I said in that first article, “From the perspective of many people, the purpose and function of WGA isn’t readily obvious. To many, our place in the Body of Christ isn’t clear, and they wonder sometimes how much need there is for our services.”

April’s article was an excruciating look at the overwhelming need for ministry to the sexually broken, both within and without the Church.

The article ended with this statement: *“It is my firm conviction that*

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*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. 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, to a restoration of God's original intent for sexuality."* WGA provides a place, an intensive care unit within the Body of Christ, where people can heal, be strengthened and become such a voice within the Church and to our society. (See *WGA and The Great Commission* excerpt on page 7.)

This month I would like to write a bit about how WGA is working with the Church. Sometimes behind the scenes, sometimes center-stage, WGA provides resources, referrals and direct ministry to individuals, pastors and other Christian leaders.

**Resources:** WGA is a clearing house of information and recommends books, tapes, and conferences for those who want to learn more about sexuality and relationship and God's provision for those who are caught up in sexual sin. Recently we met with

an elder of a church and two of their youth leaders and planned out a three week series of teachings for the junior and senior high youth of their church. We will be teaching about healthy sexuality, how to handle sexual temptation, and the purpose of attraction. In another church, we encouraged a Sunday school class with the stories of God's intervention and healing in our own lives and how he is working among WGA group members. Another Christian leader, a

Denver Seminary student, is doing her senior project on folks who are disillusioned with church and WGA is helping her get interviews and complete a survey for this project. We also maintain a library where books may be checked out, and a website which offers relevant articles, including a series of articles written by Elodie B. Emig, a Greek professor at Denver Seminary about what

the Bible has to say about homosexuality. These articles continue to provide pastors with appropriate and well-researched background for sermons on sexuality. In these ways WGA is providing much needed resources for pastors and leaders as the need comes up for this specialized information.

**Referrals:** WGA maintains a list of ministries, professional counselors

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## Remembering the Stutterer

*By Michael Spencer*

*(Reprinted with permission)*

*Last month, Michael talked about his stuttering and offered the first two things he learned from being part of the stuttering community:*

1. *What it's like to have your imperfections unavoidably noticeable.*
2. *What it's like to live with a problem for a life time.*

*We continue now with the rest of the lessons learned.*

### **3. I've learned that a problem or flaw can become the occasion for sin.**

Working with teenagers from many different backgrounds has made me a pretty unsentimental person. I feel the pain many of my students have experienced, but I'm also aware of how problems like poverty, dysfunctional families, even abuse can become the fertile soil of sin rather than redemption and righteousness.

Yes, believe it or not, my stuttering didn't entirely work for my good. At times, it became the reason I excused and tolerated sin in myself.

One of my co-workers was, for many years, a missionary to a particular disabled population. He had worked at a school for this disability and always pointed out how this disability made those who had it particularly difficult, bossy, selfish and aggressive.

When I first heard this, I thought, "How mean!" But he was undeniably right, and not just about that particular disability.

All of us who have to live with an imperfection need to face up to the fact that our "suffering" isn't automatically redemptive. Satan comes to us and presents particular kinds of sinful choices that are tied to that flaw.

Are you overweight? From a dysfunctional family? Poor? Single? Are you old? Neglected by your children? Not compensated appropriately for your work? All of these are occasions to trust Christ and move forward in his grace...or opportunities to sin, be demanding, self-pitying and manipulative.

### **4. I've learned about human cruelty and the power of love.**

When you stutter, you are going to be the butt of a lot of cruel humor. Some people in the world will be particularly cruel. Others will join in to a lesser extent, or just laugh. Or remain silent, unable to make up their minds how to act. Sometimes Christians will lead the charge to get others to laugh at what you can't help.

Since the school shootings of the last decade, there has been an aspect of youth culture that says it's weak and

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## Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

*By Patrick Maschka*

*(Reprinted from A Measure of Grace Vol 7 Issue 10)*

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*He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion (Phil 1:6)*

Sometimes we just have one of those days. Or weeks, or even longer. The world seems to come crashing down and there seem to be nothing but obstacles in the way of healing. Along with the psalmist, we cry "How long, O Lord, how long?" (Psalm 6:3) and we can think of nothing but the burdens that weigh upon our heavy souls. All of the work prior to reaching such anguish seems like a waste; sin looks easier and certainly more appealing, and the walk of faith does not appear to offer any of the promised rewards that could have been joyfully listed not so long ago.

I think it's easy to forget that God never loosens his grip on our lives, and that we are his special works-in-progress. We let things go in our lives, leaving business and projects unfinished, so to transfer our human ways to the Almighty is a natural mental step in times of trouble. Our Lord, however, is not like us. Even in our wisest moments, we have no wisdom compared to God, and it fol-

lows that our most passionate perseverance is like the first five steps in a marathon compared to God's inexhaustible endurance (see 1 Cor 1:25). God does not give up on us, and he will finish what he started. I am convinced that if we could hear his voice in those aching times, he would say something like this:

*My dear, precious child! I love you and created you as a beautiful and unique person. I know that you have suffered many hurts in your life, and that you have been deprived of many emotional needs. It is not my way to make sure that parents treat their children perfectly, and I do not prevent people from hurting each other, because then I would be a coercive and controlling god. But I grieve when my children are hurt, and I weep when they are suffering. I will not take away your history, but I will never give up on your future even if you do. I plan to turn your sad story into one that shines like the brightest star in the heavens. For the rest of eternity I will make up for the pain you have endured. ☆*



*(Stutterer continued from page 3)*

wrong to suffer cruelty and teasing without retaliating violently. In fact, in the dating culture of America, getting public, humiliating “revenge” on someone for dropping you is quite common. All of this builds on our natural, but now fallen, desire for justice. If you stutter or have another kind of public flaw, you will have many opportunities to decide if you can forgive the cruel.

I’ve noticed that I have a particularly strong reaction to those who ridicule some of our older or handicapped staff or students. I have to ask for God’s grace to not overreact when I see someone teasing an overweight kid or a student with severe acne. Those episodes stir something deep in me, and I know what is: I’m once again the stutterer on the playground. Of course, at the heart of Christianity’s story is the cruelty of those who humiliated and executed Jesus. He had prepared his disciples for this by repeatedly teaching the power of forgiveness and love towards enemies and persecutors. Those of us with public flaws and imperfections will have opportunities to see these kinds of people with the eyes of Jesus. Jesus taught that it was a great privilege to suffer for him. It’s our privilege to take cruelty aimed at us over lesser things and to transform it into opportunities to be like Christ in forgiveness and grace to others.

**5. I’ve learned about the fellowship that exists among those with persistent flaws and problems.**

I’m fascinated at how the current vogue is to make the church a fellowship of hip, cool, affluent people from great upper middle class white families with perfect kids. Hello? What Bible are you reading?

Don’t think I’m unaware that the tattooed, the pierced and the mohawked can be just as self-centered in their ideas of the church. We all can. Old. Young. Counter culture or mainstream traditionalists.

The church is gathered around Christ and the Gospel, and it looks something like this:

Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. Therefore, as the Scriptures say, “If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD.”

Sadly, many of us who are flawed live in isolation from others like ourselves. We withdraw in fear of expo-

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*(WGA's Place continued from page 2)*

and other organizations that provide services. Just today I referred a leader to a professional counselor who specializes in the area of sexual addiction. Regularly we talk with family members whose son or daughter lives in another state and can often refer them to a ministry in a nearby city, or a church that is equipped to help. We also network with other organizations that provide ministry to folks with sexual and relational sin/problems in their lives. These networks ensure that people can get connected with the right place to meet their particular needs. WGA also keeps a current list of 12-step program meetings for those looking for this sort of support.

Direct Ministry: We are serving 45-

55 weekly in our drop-in group, and several more in our Survivors of Abuse and Commitment groups. Next month I will describe in more detail the services and discipleship environment of WGA.

Why WGA? Because there is a need for a place that specializes in sexual and relational issues, and is committed to helping the Church in their ministry to their congregation, to their leaders, and to society. We are a part of the Body of Christ and want to help the Church fulfill its role in the Kingdom. It is a satisfying to be able to offer resources, referrals and direct ministry toward this end. ☆



## **Open House This Month!**

**Effective April 1st, Roger Jones became our new Executive Director. 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 5)

sure and suffering. We forget how much grace and acceptance there can be in learning that we aren't alone, that others have been down a similar road and there is hope on the road ahead.

The power of Christ is manifested among those who come to the table as a broken community of pilgrims recognizing God's grace and the Good News of the Kingdom in Je-

sus.

So today I am remembering the stutterer. He and I are the same person, but he is part of the story and I am all of the story. I can see God's hand in all of it in ways I couldn't years ago. I can thank God for the small impact stuttering had on my life, and the endless goodness and grace of God in small things. ☆

*Michael Spencer*  
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### **WGA and the Great Commission**

In the October 2006 issue of *A Measure of Grace*, Mary Heathman wrote how WGA is part of the Body of Christ and what our part is in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The article ends with this closing statement:

*What does (WGA) have to do with the Great Commission?*

*Many of God's men and women are harassed and helpless when it comes to their sexuality and relationships. They are active in their churches **and** nearly paralyzed by life-controlling sexual feelings and behaviors that sap all their energy. They are leaders in their youth groups **and** privately wondering if God's grace is for them as well as for the sinners outside the church walls." These people cannot sustain the tension; they eventually collapse under it.*

***People cannot fulfill their part in the Great Commission until they themselves are no longer the lost sheep, disconnected from the body and in need of intensive care and healing. Nor can they take their place as mature men and women of God, when they are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.***

***WGA is part of the Body of Christ, like an intensive care unit, where lost and broken people find rest, hope, and renewal—much of what it takes to keep on keeping on. They find truth, vision and accountability—much of what it takes to keep growing; and they find companions who will walk with them along the way so they need not do it alone***





## March

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### At a Glance

**March 4th:** Scott and Mary spoke at Ascension Lutheran Church

**March 23-25, 2007:** Family and Friends Retreat

#### **Thursday Night Group**

**March 1st:** 39 people

**March 8th:** 45 people

**March 15th:** 38 people

**March 22nd:** 44 people

**March 29th:** 46 people

**Orientation meeting - 3 new people**

## April

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### And Beyond

**April 15th:** Mary and Scott presenting to Corona Presbyterian Church youth on sexuality and culture

**April 22nd:** Mary and Scott presenting to Corona Presbyterian Church youth on the purpose of attraction

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

**April 29th:** Mary and Scott presenting to Corona Presbyterian Church youth on homosexuality

**May 5th:** Intercessory Prayer: Join us from 7:00—9:00 am at the WGA offices

**May 29th:** Scott presenting at Jubilee Church

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

**September 20-22nd:** Mary will be speaking at the MOPS annual leadership training convention

### WGA Staff

**Roger Jones**  
Executive Director

**Scott Kingry**  
Program Director

**Mary Heathman**  
Founding 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.

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