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# A Measure of *Grace*

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

## Worship the King

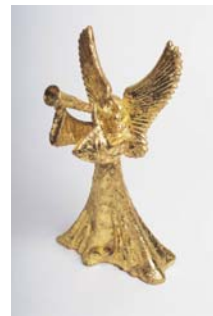
*by Roger Jones*

I'm at the center of a conspiracy. At least I believe I am. I guess I can't be sure, but the signs are everywhere. Call me paranoid if you like, but someone is out to get me. You may think I'm just being narcissistic too, but the fact remains... I am a wanted man. I've been on the run for weeks now, but it's no use. I can't escape.

How's that for an introduction to an article on worship? Perhaps you can relate to my experience. Do you ever feel like everywhere you turn, God is using something new to remind you of some new area of growth?

For me, it began a few weeks ago. I've been participating in a group led by Mary Heathman, WGA's Founding Director, called Going Deeper with God. We've been discussing the topic of emotional honesty and how to be truthful with ourselves and God about our feelings. The premise we were talking about on that particular night

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is that as we are hurt in life, we begin to hesitate to express our feelings, as they feel too vulnerable. While considering this topic, I began to understand something I had not before.

Next, I was talking with someone who was expressing about how he was dissatisfied with his relationship with God. Going to church was difficult, because he just didn't seem to connect with God in the same way he once had. Worship was difficult to enter into and he was frustrated. And, he was disappointed with himself, because he was leaving church to go and "act out" sexually.

And finally, while at church this week, my pastor's sermon was about worship. During his message, he said something like, "We were created to worship.

We are worshipping something all the time." He went on to challenge us to try and spend time worshipping God more intentionally throughout our week.

The obvious thread here is that God is at work on me in the area of worship. But the dots He has been trying to connect for me are less apparent, which I'm certain is why God has been offering me opportunity after opportunity to understand.

*He wants me to worship Him with the same passion and fervor that I feel when I worship everything else.*

I remember a story that a friend of mine once told me. Many years ago, he was a sex addict and a drug addict. One day, while in the midst of his addiction, God spoke to him, saying, "I wish you would worship me like this."

What? Surely that was not God speaking! He would never say *that*! He especially wouldn't say that to someone who was doing *that*!

Or would He?

Okay, okay... before anyone thinks that I've gone off the deep end, let me give another example, a current one from my own life. Late last night, around 10:00 or so, I was

standing in front of the open refrigerator door, peering inside. Was I hungry? Not for food, I had eaten a big dinner a couple of hours before. But guess what I did? I reached in and came out with some ice cream in my hand. And, it didn't stay in my hand... It ended up in my stomach!

Afterwards, when I was lying on the couch, feeling a little disgusted with myself for overeating, I was faced with the message God has been

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## Reflections: Thoughts from a WGA Leader

By JK

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Recently I've been thinking about wounds again. Since it's such a pleasant topic, you might wonder why I have been spending my time thinking about it so much. The main reason is that I have experienced and am experiencing a fresh wound. Somehow I thought wounding and healing would not occur simultaneously; they should be mutually exclusive, right? But they aren't, at least, in my life.

I understand that "hurts" are part of being in relationship with others, perhaps the cost of doing relationship. But in my mind, being wounded by another is very different than being hurt. And vulnerability to wounding from another, after a time of significant healing, doesn't seem right. I wasn't prepared for it. I didn't expect to feel deep new pain in the midst of healing from deep old pain. The new wound took my breath away. I don't get it.

Trying to understand my wounded soul isn't a new endeavor. But the added dimension of simultaneous wounding and healing just confuses me. It's all so intangible. I need something real to hold on to, some guide in my search for an answer. Wounds in the tangible, physical world are a little clearer to me. Since we often talk about how body, spirit, and soul are so closely intertwined, maybe understanding the wounds of a body will help me understand soul and spirit wounds.

What happens to a body when it is wounded rather than hurt? Something that hurts is painful but probably not life-threatening. A cut, a scrape, a minor burn, a pulled muscle all hurt but they are pretty easily treated. Band-Aids, antibiotic cream, cleansing and a short time for recovery take care of hurts. Wounds are an entirely different story.

When I hear the word wound, I immediately sense danger. I get the sense that loss of life is possible if something isn't done. In our culture 'wounds' are linked to gunshots and stabbings. Soldiers are wounded. Police officers are wounded in the line of duty. Wounded ones require more care, more time, and better strategies to restore health and well-being.

The son of one of my friends had a terrible biking accident which resulted in deep wounds to his face. She was of course worried about his healing, but also about how scarred his face might become. Their doctor suggested lots of rinsing with warm saline solution to prevent scarring. So day after day and many times a day, she carried out her mission to promote the best possible healing for her son. The good news is that it worked! As the saline was gently poured over the wounds, it carried away bacteria and moistened the tissue so that it had the best possible environment for healing. His face is nearly scar free. One

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## Hope in the Christ Child: Then and Now

*By Mary Heathman*

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**As** we approached Bethlehem in June earlier this year, friends and I were uneasy as we came up to the military checkpoint at the only road into the city. The wary eyes of the Israeli soldiers suggested they were also on edge as our vehicle approached the gate. As the guards studied our American passports, they questioned us.

“What is your destination and the purpose of your visit?”

“We are tourists, American Christians, here to visit the holy sites.”

At this, the soldiers visibly relaxed, smiled, waving us on through, saying, “Welcome!”

We spent several hours in Bethlehem, touring the massive Church of the Nativity, walking around the square, shopping a bit, and enjoyed a coffee break at the Franciscan monastery café. At lunchtime, we ate chicken ka-bobs and salads in a restaurant overlooking the Shepherd’s Field.

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*Shepherd's Field*

*(Christ Child continued from page 4)*

Everywhere we paused, even briefly, we were welcomed and invited to stay. (Especially if the stopping place had goods or a service to sell—customers are few and far between these days.)

In the days before Christ was born, Bethlehem was just an obscure village that probably didn't even have an inn. Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection ultimately transformed unimportant Bethlehem into one of the most significant historical sites for Christian pilgrims from all over the world.

Jesus is still transforming seemingly unimportant lives. In this Christmas season, it is my prayer for all of us who know Him already is that the Christ child will be born afresh in our hearts. And for those who don't



*Stained glass window in the Church of the Nativity*

know Him, may the Spirit of Peace break through a hectic holiday season with a Holy Presence that we can't ignore. May our season be full of Emmanuel, God With Us! ☆

*Photos taken by Mary Heathman, June 2007*



*Painting in the Church of the Nativity*



*(Reflections continued from page 3)*

would never know he had been in such a terrible accident. His healing didn't happen over night; it required significant effort, persistence, and the help of another. Although his body did do much of the work, his healing would not have been as successful without his mother's help.

I am coming to understand that these principles apply to my soul healing. I have felt my heart riddled with big gaping holes, oozing and gushing 'soul bleeds'. It feels like life is flowing away, like nothing will stop the bleeding. I've tried applying pressure, but I couldn't keep it on long enough. I've tried to suture the wound, but the stitching ripped out. I've tried bandages to cover the wound, but my 'soul blood' kept soaking through.

My efforts have been directed toward hiding my wounds so others would not see them. It's likely that I have been hiding them from myself as well. A truth about body or soul wounds is that people don't want to see them. Wounds make people feel uncomfortable. They aren't pretty, and they represent pain we don't want to look at. What would have happened to my friend's son if she had avoided his wounds? I imagine he would have developed many, lifelong scars. My soul wounds have kept bleeding because I wouldn't let them be seen. As a result, they couldn't be well cared for. I still have some deep wounds and significant scars. So what's the good news?

I've begun letting the wounds be seen, even though it's unpleasant and hurts like heck. A crucial turning point for me was that everyone did not turn away

from my wounds. Some did, but others came along side and started to pour warm, soothing saline solution on my soul wounds: affirming words, time spent with me, availability to wade into deep issues, time to talk, and huge amounts of empathy rather than disdain for what I was, and still am, going through.

Somehow that soul saline is working and the wounds have started to heal. Maybe persistence, washing the bacteria out of my wounds again and again, is the key. Or maybe it's that others are committed to the cleansing and they go there with me. I honestly don't know. What I do know is that I'm still wounded but the wounds aren't as fresh. They don't bleed as much. They don't feel quite as deep.

My freshest wound is already starting to heal. After the wound, (which I think was unintentional), was inflicted, I reverted to my typical patterns of self-treatment: pressure, sutures, and bandages. I struggled on alone for a couple of weeks, then I got angry. I felt like an idiot for being wounded in the first place, and rather than working through it, I kept it internalized. I got horribly depressed and thought, "What's the point of pursuing healing if I just keep getting wounded?" It wasn't until I asked for a WGA friend's help that I felt some relief. She listened and affirmed; in effect, she poured clean, clear saline over my wound. She was part of the healing process. The pain didn't go away but my depression subsided. The bleeding has lessened. I have hope that there won't be a deep permanent scar from this wound, that maybe there will be no scar at all. Maybe if I allow the cleansing to continue all that will be left

(Worship continued from page 2)

hounding me with again. I was worshipping my stomach (filling it, not looking at it ☺). I could have gone to God with my “hunger.” Perhaps the need that I was feeling when I found myself in front of the refrigerator was actually my need for connection with God, not a need to satisfy a food addiction. Perhaps the friend I talked about above was looking for the same thing I was last night, just in a different way.

Maybe God is calling us to something more in our worship of Him. Whatever our “ice cream” flavor is, I believe God wants us to go to Him with that deep yearning and hunger and need. He wants us to worship Him with our bodies and through our actions. We can pray, “God, I want (whatever it is) right now really badly. I feel so empty and alone, and I don’t know if these feelings will ever go away. But, I want You more than I want \_\_\_\_\_. Please teach me to be satisfied with what is good and holy. Please help me to wait for You to meet my needs.”

When we wait on God, fully aware of the cost and the way we are feeling, we are worshipping Him. We are trusting in His majesty and sovereignty in a way that goes deeper than the words to any praise song or

hymn. We are offering ourselves as living sacrifices to the Almighty Creator of the Universe.

During this holiday season, I challenge you to sift through all of the distractions and things you turn to when you want to fill that empty feeling within yourself. That emptiness is God-shaped and can only be filled by the one who created you.

***When we  
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Him.***

*Praise the Lord, O my soul; and all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good*

*things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. (Psalm 103:1-5, NIV)*

Father, thank you for sending Jesus, your son, to us. As we navigate our way through this Christmas season, please remind us of the true reason for celebration – the birth, sacrifice, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Amen. ☆



## **November**

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## **At a Glance**

**November 2nd:** WGA spoke at a local small group

**November 15th:** Sy Rogers spoke at WGA Group

### **Thursday Night Group**

**November 1st:** 46

**November 8th:** 56

**November 15th:** 100

**November 22nd:** No Group

**November 29th:** 57

**No Orientation meeting this month**

## **December**

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## **And Beyond**

**December 2nd:** Scott speaking at Corona Presbyterian Church

**December 5th:** WGA speaking to Abundant Life Christian Youth

**December 30th:** Scott presenting at Hope Fellowship Church missions event.

**January 5th:** Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 7:00—9:00 AM at the WGA offices

**March 27th:** Mary speaking at a MOPS group in Cheyenne, WY

**March 28-29:** Mary speaking at a Family and Friends Retreat for New Hope in San Rafael, 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.*

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