



July 2008  
Volume 12, Issue 7

# A Measure of *Grace*

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

## Self Disclosure *by Roger Jones*



Men and women with a past that includes secrecy and shame often have a warped sense of boundaries. Feeling shame in one area of life (such as sexuality) often leaks into other areas. Keeping secrets is hard work, and this is made easier by sharing little or nothing intimate about oneself with others. The less that is said means that fewer lies need to be told and fewer things need to be covered up.

When such men and women decide that they've had enough and begin to pursue a path out of secrecy, shame, and destructive lifestyles, they are faced with opportunities to share. Often when sharing, they allow the pendulum to swing to the other extreme. Where before they shared few or no details even with those closest to them, now they share everything, oftentimes indiscriminately with new or casual relationships.

The persons sharing feel a sense of relief, because their secret is out. A huge burden has been lifted. The persons hearing this

*(Continued on page 2)*

### *Inside this issue:*

Self Disclosure	1
The World	3
Reflections	4
June at a Glance	8
July and Beyond	8

Where Grace Abounds  
P.O. Box 18871  
Denver, Colorado 80218-0871

Office: 303/863-7757  
Fax: 303/863-7769

email:  
[info@wheregraceabounds.org](mailto:info@wheregraceabounds.org)  
website:  
[www.wheregraceabounds.org](http://www.wheregraceabounds.org)

**wga**  
where grace abounds

(Disclosure continued from page 1)

information for the first time may be traumatized, because they are discovering that they did not know their friends or loved ones as well as they believed. Or perhaps it is inappropriate or too early in a developing friendship for the information to be shared at all.

When I first came to WGA as a participant in the ministry, I worked in a restaurant. About a year or so into my healing journey, I became friends with a woman at work. We really seemed to hit it off and liked spending time together. I was simply enjoying the friendship, and I believe she was too. We had fun together and laughed a lot, but we didn't share with each other about deeply personal matters.

Other people at work began to notice how we were with each other. "Why aren't you two dating? You two would be so cute together!" I heard this over and over. I was still trying to figure things out for myself, particularly with regards to my struggle with homosexuality. I liked her, but I wasn't ready to pursue anything deeper than friendship.

The pressure from the outside grew, and finally I decided we needed to talk. "I like you, but I'm struggling with my sexuality. We can be friends, but that is all for now," I blurted out. This was too much information for our level of relationship. I regretted sharing it almost immediately. The friendship did not end because of this, but it felt awkward for awhile.

This story is a good example of sharing too much. At that time in my life, I

was telling almost everyone about my struggle with homosexuality. It made me feel better to not have this big secret looming over me anymore. But, I was often times giving other people control of my self disclosure. I let other people and circumstances dictate the timing of when I shared. Not telling everything felt like I was lying, so once I began, it usually all came pouring out.

In the workbook about sexual addiction, *Facing the Shadow*, Patrick Carnes writes in the section, Damage by Disclosure:

*Early in recovery, addicts sometimes feel so much better they want to tell everybody about their progress. In that early euphoria it is common to reveal something to someone you will later wish you had kept to yourself.....many addicts come from abusive and dysfunctional families which do not respect boundaries, so they do not have the judgment they need to make good decisions.\**

He goes on to use a "zipper" as a metaphor for disclosure.



(Continued on page 6)



## What's the World Coming To?

by Mary Heathman

---

During the years just before senility captured my grandmother's reason, I remember her often saying, "My Land, what's the world coming to?" She was often sputtering about some socially unacceptable behavior or another.

Years later, my mother, whose mind was keen clear up till the day she died, said to me, "I told myself I would never say, 'what's the world coming to,' but here I am thinking it!" She was shocked by the shameless shenanigans of a local politician whose sexual escapades were in the news daily that week.

Last week I was in a bookstore. The cover of the latest issue of *Psychology Today* caught my eye, and I did a double take. The cashier followed my gaze, and she said, "I know! I don't know what this world is coming to!" If she hadn't said it, I would have.

*Psychology Today* was my favorite magazine when it first came out in the late sixties. They were cutting edge – a popular magazine reporting notable news about what the mental health folks were learning about human beings. Long interested in human behavior and motivation, I snapped it up as soon as it came out

every month and read it from cover to cover.

The magazine lost its appeal for me years ago, and I have often been disappointed at the way it markets itself, but it hit a new low this month. On the cover of the August issue is a very young woman dressed in dominatrix gear, complete with mask and whip. The blurb associated with the picture invites us to turn to the article, "Typically Twisted" by Kathleen McGowan, and learn about "7 Taboos That are Perfectly Natural, Sexual Fantasies, Gallows Humor, Zero Ambition, Dark Secrets, + More."

Perfectly natural? Sexual fantasies, dark secrets . . . perfectly natural? Really? As is often the case, the tickler on the cover didn't entirely deliver what it promised. The story inside was tamer than you would think by the cover. But I'll bet it sold many magazines!

Some of the points McGowan made were interesting and informative. She talked about the underlying causes of a lack of motivation, how keeping secrets is destructive to emotional well being, and how a parent can be eaten alive with guilt over natural differences in the way they

(Continued on page 7)

## Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

*By Nancy Hicks*

---

### Hide and Seek

We read Psalm 32 in church on Sunday. I was struck by the Psalmist's words in verses 5 and 7:

**5** Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

**7** You are my hiding place;  
you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

"You are my hiding place" reminded me of Adam and Eve in the garden after they had sinned by not obeying and believing God. They were afraid of God and ashamed of their nakedness. When He came looking for them and when they didn't readily appear, He called for them. Adam peeked out from behind a bush and a fig leaf where he was hiding and said tentatively, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid be-



cause I was naked; so I hid" (Gen. 3). God coaxed out the truth of their confession and then they blamed everyone else for their sin. It's such a pathetic pattern, isn't it? We've followed the same script for hundreds of generations: we don't truly believe that God is good and knows what He's talking about, so we do what He says not to and then we're afraid of Him and ashamed and we try to hide. When we finally get to the point of admitting what we did, more times than not we find someone else to blame for our moral failure. Over and over and over, time without end. If I were God, it would make me really tired.

It is interesting that God's response to Adam and Eve isn't to tell them, "Take off those ridicu-

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Reflections continued from page 4)*

lous leaves—I made you naked and you’re going to learn to live with it!” Instead, I am struck by His tenderness in meeting them in the reality of their shame by making much better coverings for them out of leather. Instead of offering more shame, God offers them—and us—a place to hide and be covered. He offers to clothe us with robes of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). He pleads with us, “don’t hide FROM me, hide IN me.” He is the one who wants to cover our nakedness and shame.

And He has much better materials than the poison ivy we hastily snatch to cover ourselves in a panic.

He shed the blood of animals to cover Adam and Eve’s outer nakedness in the Garden, and He shed the blood of His son to cover our internal nakedness. Do we really believe we can hide our nakedness from God, or cover up our iniquities? He already sees us. He has already offered a place to hide—before we even knew we were afraid. ☆

### **Intercessory Prayer**

Do you have a sense of compassion for others? Intercessory prayer is a great way to put this gift into action!

WGA meets for intercessory prayer every first Saturday of the month. Please join us for this special focused time to pray on behalf of others. For more details, please contact the WGA office.



*"I commend intercessory prayer, because it opens man's soul, gives a healthy play to his sympathies, constrains him to feel that he is not everybody, and that this wide world and this great universe were not after all made that he might be its petty lord, that everything might bend to his will, and all creatures crouch at his feet."*

Charles Spurgeon

(Disclosure continued from page 2)

*When you live in shame, the zipper to yourself is located on the outside. Anyone can unzip and access information—or sex or your commitment to do things you do not want to do. It is hard to say no. Healthy people have the zipper on the inside. They decide who gets access. They have boundaries—in other words they know where the line is between themselves and other people. Addicts suffer from boundary failure—especially in early recovery.\**

Carnes's point is valid for those dealing with any type of relational or sexual brokenness. When secrecy and shame have ruled in our lives, we feel great freedom as we begin to share. In that feeling of freedom, we can cause damage and consequences we did not anticipate.

There are people in our lives who must know about us and our process of recovery. These are the people who will be vitally important to us in our healing journey. Examples are our therapist, family, and the people closest to us. With these, it is important to determine not whether to tell, but when and how much.

In his workbook, Carnes includes a Disclosure Plan.\* This is a practical tool when trying to decide whom to tell and how much to share. The steps are as follows:

1. **Identify the person to be told.**
2. **Decide what material is to be disclosed.** Review the nature of the relationship, and ask yourself, "What is appropriate for this person to know about me?"
3. **Think about the payoff of disclosing this information.** What do you hope this disclosure will accomplish in your relationship? Will it bring you closer? Will it remove a barrier that has been present?
4. **Plan for when and where to share the information.** Where is the place you will both feel the most safe? Ensure that you have enough time to discuss things thoroughly.
5. **Plan for the support you need.** It is important to have the feedback of someone you trust throughout this process. Make sure to include this trusted friend or counselor throughout this process.

Self disclosure is a good thing, and done well, it

can be a positive experience. Living an open and transparent life is the goal of everyone in recovery. We must remember to take care as we distinguish the truth of who we really are from the false beliefs we have encouraged others to believe about us. ☆

\* *Facing the Shadow*, by Patrick Carnes, Gentle Path Press, 2001, pgs. 126-129.

*There are  
people in our  
lives who must  
know about  
us and our  
process of  
recovery.*

(The World continued from page 3)  
feel about their children.

Getting back to the dominatrix – right in the middle of the article about everyday people with everyday problems, the author says:

*Human-sexuality experts have a general rule: Unusual sexual practices are mostly harmless as long as they are part of a range of sexual responses. . . . nothing to worry about unless it's the only thing that turns you on. A little bit of kink is a good thing if it spurs open-mindedness and a spirit of adventure. But when an object or a ritual becomes more important than the living, breathing partner, it gets in the way of a relationship and of sexual fulfillment.*

Kernels of truth can be drawn from McGowan's comments. It is true that one should not be inordinately concerned over thoughts that flash through the mind. And sexuality isn't to be a shameful thing, but enjoyed, even playfully. But the author and her sources go too far saying, "a little bit of kink is a good thing. . . ."

The truth is, a little bit of kink, dwelt upon, practiced and incorporated into one's belief system becomes the new normal and it soon takes a little more,

then a little more, and on and on. A little kink may grow gradually at first, then exponentially until a full-blown sexual addiction "becomes more important than the living, breathing partner." I have experienced this myself, and paid a steep price. I have seen it in the lives of men and women whose eyes are empty and whose lives have been drained of all vitality, often who have lost a significant relationship before they even knew it was at risk.

It isn't until that point of loss of intimacy with a spouse, or when they become aware that their life revolves around getting time with their fantasies, that a person might wake as if from a dream, and think, "I wonder if I have a problem?" They describe how they have been indulging in what they thought was harmless, victimless, fantasy, but it has turned on them and now they can't stop.

***A little kink may grow gradually at first, then exponentially until a full-blown sexual addiction "becomes more important than the living, breathing partner."***

You've heard it said, "A friend doesn't let a friend drive drunk." I challenge therapists and friends alike: *"Friends don't encourage friends in their pursuit of a fantasy life. Friends inspire friends to live a real life, investing in real relationships."*

It is along these lines that I hope you join me in praying for WGA group members. ☆



## June At a Glance

**June 8th: WGA attended missions fair at Christ Episcopal Church**

**June 17th: WGA exhibited at The Next Level Church**

**June 21st: WGA Group activity—Rockies Game**

### Thursday Night Group

**June 5th: 52 people**

**June 12th: 47 people**

**June 19th: 60 people**

**June 26th: 71 people**

**Orientation meeting - 7 new people**

## July And Beyond

**July 9-13th: Mary will be presenting at the Friends United Triennial**

**July 15-20th: Exodus International Freedom Conference in Asheville, NC**

**September 19-21st: Mary will be speaking at the New Hope Family and Friends Retreat in San Rafael**

**October 26th: WGA Presenting at First Denver Friends Church**

### WGA Staff

**Roger Jones**  
Executive Director

**Scott Kingry**  
Program Director

**Mary Heathman**  
Founding Director

**Janet Moine**  
Assistant Program 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 2008