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# A Measure of Grace

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## Maintaining Hope in an Environment of Fear

*By Roger Jones*

Lately, it seems that every time I turn on the TV or catch a snippet of news online or in a newspaper, I am bombarded with disappointing and scary information. The economy is failing. The stock market is breaking records, plunging downward. Political attack ads are everywhere, trying to make us afraid of whoever the “other” candidate is. Taken at face value, all of these messages can make us feel that the world is on the brink of disaster.

The reality is that times are hard for many people. A gallon of gasoline does in fact cost more than it did a few years ago. We buy less food at the grocery store for the same amount of

money. Many of us are facing difficulties making mortgage payments. Some of us have already lost a home or a job. All of these things increase our anxiety and fear, regardless of how deeply we are personally being

*(Continued on page 2)*



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*(Maintaining Hope continued from page 1)*

impacted. The climate we live in is anxious and afraid, and we cannot help but feel it.

In the midst of all of this concern and unease, we are faced with choices about how we cope with the stress. Anxiety is often a trigger for people to turn towards things that ease the pain. While I haven't read any recent studies on this, I don't believe it is a stretch to say that while many industries are seeing a decline in sales, others like pornography, alcohol, and gambling are likely increasing. Of course, these things only bring temporary relief, causing us to forget our problems for a short while.

But as always, these things only add to the problems we face and make our anxiety and fear increase further. And then we're back where we started, seeking temporary comfort again and again.

I believe that a big part of this cycle is connected to hope. It is scary to trust that God will meet our needs, when everything we hear from the world is telling us that things are falling apart. Rather than placing our hope and faith in God, we again attempt to meet our own needs. And, we fail.

Scripture tells us the story of Job. He is an excellent example of perseverance in the face of difficult times. In fact, even referring to him as having

"difficult times" is a grave injustice. Job lost everything, including his property and even his children. Yet in the midst of his suffering, he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him." (Job 13:15, NIV) No matter what happened, Job believed God would vindicate him. Later we find out that He did! All that was lost was restored to him.

A few weeks ago, I found myself buried in fear. I was troubled by the economy: for myself, for WGA, and for our nation. As I was wallowing in that state, God met me there. I didn't hear an audible voice, but I suddenly had a sense that everything would be alright. No amount of worrying on my part would actually change anything.

He reminded me that in times of hardship, people turn to Him for answers. We forget how blessed we are here in the United States sometimes. We forget that God is our pro-

vider, because we feel perfectly capable of meeting our own needs. Seasons of difficulty remind us of our need for God.

I was greatly comforted by this. God didn't tell me that my life and the lives of those I care about would be free from challenge. But, I was able to relax a little bit and remember that *God* is God, and I am not. What a relief! My job is to do my best to trust in His

*(Continued on page 7)*

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## I Can Never Out-Love the Lord

### *A Message from Mary Heathman*

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*Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the May 1998 issue of A Measure of Grace*

**S**remembered something today that I hadn't really forgotten. It just got buried somewhere in the rubble of my day to day cares and concerns these past few months

I regularly remind myself and anyone who cares to listen that *ministry, at it's most basic, is simply a response to God - loving Him because He first loved us; then loving whom and what He loves because we just can't help it. In loving God, we will become like Him, and we will love as He loves.* This definition has remained constant and is the guiding principle of my approach to ministry. But recently, I did let another, equally important, conviction fade away: ***in loving as Jesus loves, I can never out-love the Lord.***

Knowing that I can never out-love the Lord makes all the difference! It means that no matter the circumstances in my life, no matter

the cost, it is always worth it. No matter how much I give, He has already outdone me and will continue to do so. And, wonder of wonders, I am a beloved recipient of His lavish outpouring of love. I can expend myself with abandon, for when I abide in Him, the Lord will always fill me up faster than I can pour myself out.

When I lose sight of the fact of His pouring into me more than I could ever pour out, I become resentful, feel drained, "weary of well-doing," so to speak, and ministry becomes a chore. I am grateful that the Lord got my attention before I went very far down the resentment road, but I was headed in that direction. Lately, life and ministry had lost its sheen and looked drab and pointless to me. The dust of the road was blurring my vision.

When I think back, it seems that I let the dust start piling up a couple of years ago. It will soon be two years since I lost a deeply loved friend when he succumbed to his battle with AIDS. Some of you may remember the newsletter articles about Jim's commitment to the Lord and his faithful service on

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Reflections: Thoughts from a WGA Leader

*By Nancy Hicks*

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**Editors Note:** *This article originally appeared in the November 2005 issue of a Measure of Grace*

Isaiah 50:10 & 11  
Who is among you that fears the Lord,  
That obeys the voice of His servant,  
That walks in darkness and has no light?  
Let him trust in the name of the Lord  
and rely on his God.  
Behold all you who kindle a fire.  
Who encircle yourselves with fire-  
brands,  
Walk in the light of your fire  
And among the brands you have set  
ablaze.  
This you will have from My hand;  
And you will lie down in torment.

Imagine being lost in a vast stretch of wilderness in the pitch black—say, at one of the ends of the earth where darkness covers everything for months at a time. You have the choice between having a flashlight in your hand, and being lead in the dark by a silent guide. The flashlight would be tangible; you could feel it in your hand. You could



control it—in the midst of feeling so little control—by turning it off and on. If there was a strange noise, you could quickly turn the light to see the source. No cliff or gaping hole could take you by surprise with such a trusty tool.

On the other hand, what if the silent guide moves more quickly than you do? What if you fail to follow well and find yourself in a hole or falling off of a sheer rock face? How can you be assured that you are being led, or haven't been left behind?

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Reflections continued from page 4)*

The natural inclination would be to choose short-term control—the flashlight. But another moment’s reflection would reveal that in the larger scheme, a flashlight would be of very little help. You would still not know the way out of the wilderness. You would simply see a 10 foot circle of where you were lost. Eventually, the battery would run down. Eventually, you would have to sleep with no guarantee of safety. Eventually, you would be engulfed by the same lonely darkness you began with.

God offers me Himself as guide—a dicey, scary proposition. I have to trust that He knows what He’s doing, that He has my best interest in mind and that He won’t forget about me.

I do have other options—flashlights, if you will. I can make enough money to protect myself and pave the way; I can get enough education so

that I can ensure that I will have the understanding and job security that I need to find my way; I can be sure to have a spouse, children, friends, to protect me and guide me and ensure that I am not alone. I can until the stock market crashes, my health fails, the unexpected accident interrupts my plans, the people in my life fail me and leave me. Then I find myself sitting with a dead flashlight in the dark.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6).

I am sorry if this speaks to your condition, because you are probably in a place of darkness. But I am glad if this speaks to your condition, because God is a worthy guide. Where can we go, but to Him?

**“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.”**

Corrie ten Boom

*(Out-Love continued from page 3)*

the WGA leadership team. I still experience acute loss when I think of him, and just realized today that the pain of those last few months is as alive now as it was the day he died.

I remember telling the Lord that it was too much, that loving that much just seemed to be a set-up for more pain. I didn't throw a big fit, or rebel dramatically. I didn't shut the Lord out of my life, stop praying, or turn my back on him. I simply kept my grief to myself, refusing to pour it out to God, so it has taken its toll.

But today, praise God, I remembered! In our intercessory prayer meeting this morning, we were reminded of Jim as we prayed for ministry in Colorado Springs (his heart's burden). After taking leave of my fellow pray-ers, the familiar feelings surfaced. But this time, I was even too tired to fight them off; I just let them wash over me, praying and crying. And as the tears and prayers washed away the dust, the reminder came in the words of a Gaither song, I Could Never Out-love the Lord. Verse one says:

*There've been times when  
giving and loving brought pain;  
And I promised I would never  
let it happen again; But I found  
out that loving is well worth the*

*risk; And that even in losing  
you win.*

Those words were seared into my heart during a particularly painful time when my heart was broken, and my spirit was crushed. Truth applied in those circumstances has a way of taking root never to be dislodged.

And then, with a flood of relief, I remembered my conviction and commitment of years ago; I found it still true, and clean and solid in my deep heart today once the dust was washed off. In the words of the chorus of the song:

*I'm going to live the way He  
wants me to live; I'm going to  
give until there's just no more  
to give; I'm going to love 'til  
there's just no more love - I  
could never, never out-love the  
Lord.*

The reader may wonder why such an experience as mine would be placed in a ministry newsletter. I hesitated myself, having written this initially as a journal entry. It was cathartic for me, but I questioned its usefulness to others. It appears here for two reasons:

1)WGA's ministry is intensely personal and operates on the premise that we are to live transparent lives before God

*(Continued on page 7)*

*(Out-Love continued from page 6)*

and one another. Here I am,  
*Mary Heathman, Unplugged!*

2)The troublesome effects of unexpressed grief torment many of WGA's group members. As they live with deep disappointment and long-term deferred hope, they often lose their bearings, or get discouraged. It is my hope that the telling of my experience will encourage these dear people to take heart and remember who God is, that

they can never be so low that He is not there to lift them. It just takes a bit of dusting off, sometimes through many tears and much prayer, but in His time our perspective will change or be restored.

Praise God that this is so. May we all live as though we believe it!

*(Maintaining Hope continued from page 2)*

goodness and His mercy.

In this time of chaos and crisis happening around us, there is great opportunity for revival among God's people. I hope this is as exciting to you as it is to me! While I am still prone to feeling fear from time to time, I am eager to see how God uses this current turmoil for His Glory.

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. **There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do***

*with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:16-18, NIV, emphasis added)*





## **September**

### **At a Glance**

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

**September 14th:** Mary spoke at Little Chapel of the Hills

**September 21st:** WGA presented at Calvary Worship Center in Colorado Springs

## **October**

### **And Beyond**

**October 12:** WGA participating in missions event at Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church

**October 17–19th:** WGA Leadership Retreat

**October 25th:** WGA participating and exhibiting at Love Won Out, sponsored by Focus on the Family

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

**October 29:** WGA presenting at Galilee Baptist Church

**October 30th:** Open Meeting. Call the WGA office if you would like to visit our Thursday Night Group

#### **Thursday Night Group**

**September 4th:** 45 people  
**September 11th:** 30 people  
**September 18th:** 38 people  
**September 25th:** 44 people

**Orientation meeting:** 10 new people

#### **WGA Staff**

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*A Measure of Grace*  
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*Where Grace Abounds*  
exists to guide and support  
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understand sexuality and  
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personally appropriate  
God's plan for their  
sexuality and relationships.

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