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A Measure of Grace

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Fighting the Lamb's War

by Mary Heathman

Recently there gathered a diverse group of men and women all united by righteous anger because an injustice had been done; we shared a collective sense that the Lord was calling some of us to plan and implement a strategy to right the wrong. The conversation was lively and energetic. Though we all agreed that there is a systemic problem in our society and something must be done to address it, we were of varied opinions as to the nature and roots of the problem(s) and the way(s) in which it should be approached. At one point, some one blurted out, "We have to go after these people; we have to fight back! We need to understand that we are in a battle!"

"We are in a battle." I agree—with just as much passion and energy as the speaker blurted out his statement—we are indeed in a war. It is essential that we fight hard and tenaciously.

The issue for me is, "How would the Lord have us

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fight this war; what is His plan; what weapons will He put in our hands; what is our part in this war, and what is His?"

Over the years in ministry, I have been challenged by biblical accounts of battles won the Lord's way. Like one familiar story from 1 Samuel, where David, a small shepherd boy, (after shedding all the armor and weapons that he had been given), challenges the giant, Goliath, saying, "*The whole earth will know that there's an extraordinary God in Israel. And everyone gathered here will learn that God doesn't save by means of sword or spear. The battle belongs to God—He's handing you to us on a platter!*" Then David runs out toward the giant and kills him with "a stone and a sling" (1Samuel 17:47).

***I am not
willing to be
caught up in a
battle fought
according to
this world's
wisdom.***

Another biblical character, King Jehoshaphat, "*received this intelligence report: 'A huge force is on its way from beyond the Dead Sea to fight you. There's no time to waste . . .'*" Shaken, Jehoshaphat prayed" (2Chronicles 20, *The Message*). No time to waste, and Jehoshaphat ordered a nationwide fast, called all the people together, and had a prayer meeting! He prayed, "*We don't know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.*" Then a voice from the crowd, Jahaziel, "*moved by the Spirit of God*" gave an astounding message, "*This is God's war, not yours. Tomorrow you*

will go after them. . . . You won't have to lift a hand in this battle; just stand firm, . . . and watch God's saving work for you take shape. Don't be afraid, don't waver. March out boldly tomorrow—God is with you." (2Chronicles 20:15-17, *The Message*). And they did go out—led by the choir dressed in robes, shouting out with the weapons of worship and praise, saying "*Give thanks to God, His love never quits.*" When they came up over the hill, they looked down on a field of dead soldiers—the Lord had confused the enemy army and they had turned on one another.

The Israelites didn't have to lift a finger, only march out with the choir with their weapons of praise and worship.

What foolishness! What silliness! How unprofessional the soldiers must have thought the strategy to be.

However, I think that's the point—the Lord's movement, not ours, His spirit, not our might and power. Then the adversary and the Lord's army alike are stunned with the reality of our God. The victory is His and everybody knows it. Maybe for this reason He chooses "*the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.*" (1Co 1:27) Even the term, "Lamb's War" is silly when you think about it—the weakest, least assertive animal there is, is used to illustrate Je-

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Restoration through Repentance

By Nancy Hicks

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

I have found the following exercise of repentance to be challenging, healing and helpful. I hope you will too. What a great way to start the new year! It can be used as an individual or group exercise. And takes about 30 minutes of uninterrupted time, a watch and courage. There is a scripture reading, a question and a prayer to ponder during a brief time of reflection and then a confession at the end of each of the 5 sections. The goal here is to hear what God wants to speak to me today—not a 500 page catalogue review of my sin, but the bite-sized piece He wants to look at with me today.

You might start by praying with the Psalmist in Psalm 139:23-24 (TNIV)
“Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.”

1. Recognition of my sin. The Bible says that I have sinned.

Scripture: I Jn 1:6,8,10 “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. . . If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. . . If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”

Question: What sin – past and/or present -- hinders me from moving forward with God?

Prayer: God, by your Holy Spirit, please bring to mind a sinful choice that I have made and possibly continue to make, that blinds me and binds me.

Silent reflection (3 minutes or so)

Confession of recognition: I confess that I have chosen my own way over that of God’s way. And I believe that this choice has been a movement towards death and not life.

2. Remorse for my sin – a gnawing distress arising from a sense of guilt for past wrongs. (Note: It’s reasonable to be afraid here. But in order to let go of the things that bind and blind us, we often need to look them full in the face and name them)

Scripture: Isaiah 53:4-6 “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Question: How has this sinful choice grieved God and people?

Prayer: By your grace, Father, please reveal to me the truth about my sin.

Silent reflection (3 minutes or so)

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Marcia, Marcia, Marcia!

By Scott Kingry

Another childhood icon bites the dust. Every so often, another book hits the stands by a beloved, former child-actor who is all grown up and for some reason needs the cathartic process of revealing to the public years of secret darkness and dysfunction. The latest of these tell-all memoirs is Maureen McCormick's *Here's the Story: Surviving Marcia Brady and Finding My True Voice*. Maureen played Marcia Brady on one of my favorite 70's sitcoms growing up—"The Brady Bunch." In her book, she recounts the many battles she faced with drug addiction, depression, random sexual encounters, a collapsed marriage and an eating



disorder—far from the perfect popular girl at Westdale High, who made her neurotic younger sister Jan green with envy.

And that is exactly what brought on all the damage—having to live up to the squeaky clean persona of Marcia Brady. She's quoted dur-

Brady, Marcia



Student Body President, Senior Class President, Debating Team, Prom Committee, Cheerleading, President of the Davy Jones Fan Club, Drama Club

ing an interview on the Today Show as saying, "Playing Marcia Brady was a double-edged sword. You will always be known as that character forever. I felt like I had to show to the public that I was Marcia—perfect, with no problems. I didn't think I could be my imperfect self." So poor Maureen, while dying on the inside, lived with the heavy burden of presenting a nice image to world. It sounds very familiar.

I remember being sort of let down when I saw Maureen's many interviews on television as she was promoting her book. I really don't want my childhood idols having any tarnish on them. It's embarrassing to admit now, but

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while I was going through my own hellish growing up years, I clung to those perfect TV families to give me some sense of normalcy. I remember often wishing I could be in a family like the Braddys'. I guess I was as much invested in the image of Marcia Brady as Maureen was, but the reality is that she was a broken person like me—how disappointing.

Why is there the need for such well crafted “images”? Well, many WGA participants and I have realized that somewhere in our pasts, it became unsafe to share our flawed selves. Showing ourselves “warts and all” usually brought on some sort of rejection, which is what we feared most. The attendant shame or legalism didn't really helped us be ourselves either. Sometimes it just comes down to good, old fashioned pride—I want people to think I'm more together than I really am. So, it's easier just to hide. This only exacerbates the problem, since addiction thrives in an atmosphere of shame and secrecy. Meanwhile, we try to live up to the perfectionist image we've constructed: defining any kind of weakness as unacceptable; creating unreasonable standards for ourselves and others; and hav-

ing a hard time saying “no,” lest we disappoint anyone.

Along with many others, I was grateful to find the environment Where Grace Abounds provides every Thursday night. I experienced grace there for the first time in my life. It was news to me that God loved me “warts and all.” When I revealed anything that was embarrassing or shaming I was never rejected, so I felt this grace in a very tangible way. Since God's kindness leads us to repentance, I soon wanted to let go of the “false image” and the destructive ways I was coping with my pain and desired for God to bring healing to me and my relationships. Every time I choose to be honest and transparent in the context of a safe relationship or environment (probably not the general public), I am able to experience a deeper level of God's grace, which in turn leads to living more authentically. I wonder how things might have been different for Marcia Brady if she had come to Where Grace Abounds.



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sus' approach to war.

The concept of the Lamb's War was introduced to me in early Friends (Quaker) writings. By way of explanation of the term, I offer this quote from Jack Smith's presentation to the General Gathering of Conservative Friends, June 17, 2006, in Barnesville, Ohio:

"The first generation of Friends developed the term "Lamb's War" to portray the struggle of Christ with the forces of Satan or evil. For early Friends this was not an abstract theological concept but a reality that they experienced themselves " "This struggle touched all areas of early Friends' lives - personal relationships, economic relationships, political relationships, religious relationships, etc."

"For first-generation Friends, the Lamb's War was a struggle of an absolute nature, with no room for compromise and lukewarm commitment. Early Friends did not see themselves as initiating this struggle. They understood that it was led by Jesus Christ and that they were His followers being led into this great and epic spiritual battle. [Revelation 19:11-15] It was a holy war. The weapons provided by God were spiritual in nature, as opposed to the carnal weapons used by the Lamb's opponents [Ephesians 6:10-18]. Early Friends felt sustained in absolute obedience to Jesus Christ by the power of His cross.

Call me hopelessly naïve—you wouldn't be the first. But I am not willing to be caught up in a battle fought accord-

ing to this world's wisdom. Those battles swallow you up, and even when won are quickly followed by another and another as our adversary ratchets up the intensity, pours on the media blitz, and wages a vicious public relations campaign characterizing our efforts as mean spirited and our values as ridiculous—God's standards as archaic, outdated, irrelevant. No, instead, I identify strongly with the character in a film about Quaker farmers at the onset of the Civil war who says to his friend, "I'm just holding out for a better way of settling things."

However, make no mistake, I am fighting. The staff and leadership at WGA are waging war according to the guidance and direction we get from the Lord in our prayer meetings, and in our leadership planning meetings. Among the weapons of our warfare are *"the word of truth, the power of God, the armor of righteousness on the right hand and the left"* (2Co 6:7). In addition, we know we work only in the power and authority given to us as His ministers of grace and truth. In His strength, we fight with tenacity, and with a passionate commitment to the calling the Lord has given us. And we don't fight this battle alone—we have a veritable army of friends, family, collaborators together in this war. We are grateful for the blessing of this support!

Next month, I will write a bit about what this war looks like moment by moment. What does the Lamb's War look like in practice? I will be thinking and praying about that for the next few weeks—your prayers are welcome!

(Restoration continued from page 3)

Confession of remorse: I confess that my death choice has caused grief in my own soul, in the lives of others, and in God's loving heart.

3. Resolution of the conflict between the weight of my sin and my desire for freedom.

Scripture: I John 1: 7 & 9 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. . . If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Question: Do I believe that God can forgive, heal and bring His light to this dark place in my soul and relationships?

Prayer: Jesus, help my unbelief. Help me to believe that you have cast my sins as far as the east is from the west. Help me to believe that I stand blameless before the Father because you have forgiven me for this sin – past, present and future.

Silent reflection (3 minutes or so)

Confession of resolution: I confess that God has provided a way-- through Jesus-- to bring light, hope and healing into this dark place in my heart.

4. Restitution – the return of something to its rightful owner; compensation for a loss, damage, or injury

Scriptures: Micah 6:8 "No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you:

to do what is right, to love mercy,

and to walk humbly with your God." (New living translation)

Psalms 51:17 "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;

a broken and contrite heart

you, God, will not despise.." (TNIV)

Question: What one thing can I choose today or this week in my speech, habits, relationships and life that reflects my belief that God has forgiven me and delights in me?

Prayer: God, show me something tangible that I can do to express my awareness of new life and light.

Silent reflection (3 minutes or so)

Confession of restitution: I confess that God shows me ways to do justice and love mercy in the face of my own sin's consequences—bringing life into that death.

5. Reformation – a reformed state, being changed for the better

Scripture: Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Question: There is no question here. God will do what He has promised.

Prayer: O LORD, you are our Father.

We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. (Is 64:8)

Silent reflection (3 minutes or so)

Confession of Reformation: I confess that God's good plan for repentance doesn't stop at freeing me from guilt, but includes continually re-forming me so that I bring a truer and more whole version of who He created me to be to each choice that I encounter.



December

At a Glance

December 6th: Some staff and leadership attended the wedding of a WGA leader

December 13th: Intercessory Prayer

December 13th: WGA Christmas party

December 31st: New Year's party with WGA leadership and alumni

Thursday Night Group

December 4th:

December 11th:

December 18th:

December 25th: No Group

Orientation meeting: 1 new person

January

And Beyond

January: WGA presenting at a local prison

January 10th: Growth Group begins

January 10th: Survivors of Abuse Group begins

February 7th - Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 7:00 - 9:00 am at the WGA offices.

March 13-14th: WGA seminar featuring Sy Rogers

April 6th & 13th: WGA speaking at CU Annex in Boulder

April 24-26th: WGA Family and Friends Retreat

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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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