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A Measure of Grace

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

WGA and the Church ~ In the Thick of Things Together

By Roger Jones

I was driving to work the other day and was reminded of just how “in the thick of things” Where Grace Abounds is. When I say “reminded,” what I really mean is that I was BOMBARDED by everything going on around me and near the WGA offices. We are located just off of Colfax Avenue, one of the most historic streets in Denver. It also has a “reputation,” which is part of why WGA fits here so well.

Colfax is known for drugs and bars and prostitution. Just two doors down from our office is an interesting shop where all the mannequins in the window are only wearing leather underwear. Across the street is a country/western gay bar, and within a few blocks are two adult bookstores. A few blocks north of us, is another gay bar and a couple of drag queen themed restaurants. Lest anyone who hasn't visited the area think that there are no other types of businesses, there is also a Wendy's, a Pizza Hut, two concert venues, a Blockbuster, and a car wash all in the same area too!

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

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

email:
info@wheregraceabounds.org
Website:
www.wheregraceabounds.org



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On Tuesday, February 24th, twenty five pastors from all over the city joined us for a luncheon at our office. It was such a blessing to have them come into the mission field I described above and join us to discuss how best to minister to those who are trapped in sexual sin. These pastors have a passion to love those that the church has so often forgotten or rejected.

Pastors who attended the luncheon came ready to share and ask questions. "How do I share the truth about God's standard for sexuality in a way that people receive it as love?" "How do we help the church deal with the whole person and not just a sexual issue?" "Why do we turn a blind eye to pornography and cohabitation outside of marriage, but make such a big deal about homosexuality?"

These are just a few of the topics we discussed.

We had opportunity to remind them about the groups and services WGA provides and how we can work alongside them in ministry to men and women struggling with sexual and relationship problems. A key aspect of what WGA has to offer the church is education. We introduced them to some seminar and teaching suggestions and presented a thirty minute talk about how sexual problems develop.

I was struck by how this group of men and women from many different denominations are truly concerned with how sexual issues are impacting those in their churches. They were keenly aware of the delicacy of many of the issues, and that their words and attitudes can either draw someone closer to Christ or maybe push them away.

I hope you are encouraged, as I am, that there are pastors who are striving to understand sexual and relationship problems. So many churches have

turned a blind eye to the difficulties people are facing in their daily lives. These men and women who came to the meeting clearly want to love those God brings to them and to create an environment of safety and healing within their midst. WGA has a long-standing relationship with each of these churches, and we will be partnering together more closely in the coming

months. We are excited to have them "in the thick of things" with us.

If you have been wounded through your participation in church, I pray that God will lead you to a safe harbor where you are able to heal. Please remember that there are many ministers and churches doing their best to create authentic community where grace and truth work together. If you are looking for a church in the Denver area, there are a number that we could recommend to you, many that we know personally. Please let us know!

I hope you are encouraged, as I am, that there are pastors who are striving to understand sexual and relationship problems.

The Lamb's War ~ Part Three

By Mary Heathman

A Bit of Review

Excerpts from my first article, Fighting the Lamb's War, in the January, 2009, newsletter:

"We are in a battle. . . . It is essential that we fight hard and tenaciously."

[It must be] . . . "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."

"I am not willing to be caught up in a battle fought according to this world's wisdom. However, . . . I am fighting. The staff and leadership at WGA are waging war . . ."

"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, co-laborers together in this war. We are grateful for the blessing of this support!

In the Lamb's War there is a clearly defined enemy. We are told that our battle is *"not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."* We are also informed about what this enemy's ultimate goal—*"your enemy . . . prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* (1Peter 5:8b)

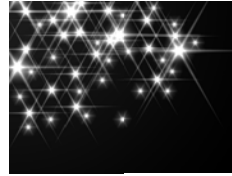
It is clear to us that all humanity has an enemy that is actively seeking to destroy us. We understand that we are to *"be self-controlled and alert"* (1Peter 5:8a). We ask ourselves, "with what shall I fight; what will protect me and what are my weapons?"

Even a cursory look at scripture with those questions in mind results in clear answers. We are to fight from a position of strength *"in the Lord and in his mighty power."*

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Reflections: Thoughts from a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks



Glow-in-the-Dark Grace

My son has these great one-piece fuzzy pajamas that have glow-in-the-dark stars on them. They're quite outstanding— if it's dark. I was reminded of this when we spent the weekend in a little town in Kansas recently. Our home in the suburbs of Denver rests in the perpetual twilight of a big city, so even with the blinds closed, it's never pitch black. But in rural Kansas, it can get really inky. We turned out the lights and as my eyes tried to adjust to nothing, they drifted in the direction of the bed next to me. I saw little glowing stars steadily rising and falling in sync with the small, whiffley snore that I love. Suddenly my world was right, things were as they should be, and I drifted off to sleep.

I am seeing the same phenomena in another realm these days. As the bright sun of perpetual materialistic indulgence is setting, the twilight of careful discretionary spending is rolling in with a chill. And if you listen closely, you can hear the murmured whimpers of the prescient who recognize their fear of the dark scarcity. It's getting just a bit harder to recog-

nize things that have long been familiar. The lines are blurring around the silhouettes of "necessities."

But as the light fades, grace seems to glow increasingly. I witness small acts of selflessness and generosity and they seem to glow as never before against the backdrop of dusky apprehensions. Simple people living the law of love, despite the lack of light, are beginning to stand out like beacons.

Jesus says to us: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matt 5:14)

My son was simply sleeping in his pajamas; simply doing the next thing in front of him. May we simply live and move and have our being in Him who is the light of the world; in Him of whom it is said, "the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." (Matt 4:16 & Is. 9:1&2)

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We are to “*Put on the full armor of God*” which consists of “*the belt of truth, . . . “ the breastplate of righteousness,”* and the “*readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*” To round out the package, we are to “*take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*”. With all this in place, we are told we will be able to take our “*stand against the devil's schemes,*” as we keep in mind to “*pray in the Spirit . . . and always keep on praying for all the saints.*” (Eph 6: 10-20)

Our weapons are not like the world's weapons, “*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.*” “*The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*” (2Cor10:3-4) As Eugene Peterson describes it in *Reversed Thunder*:

“We who accompany Jesus across the mountains and through the valleys of salvation are permitted no other weapons. When St. Peter, eager to fight the evil forces that were sweeping Jesus towards the cross, bared his weapon and with an awkward swing managed to cut off the ear of the high priest's slave, Jesus put an immediate stop to it—“no more of this!”—and

repaired the damage with his healing touch..”ⁱ

There is rarely confusion among Christians about these scriptural concepts. We lose clarity, however, as soon as we begin thinking about the day to day ramifications. A WGA leader, during a discussion on spiritual warfare, put it this way, “Okay, we have prayed; I am standing ready with my faith in place, and a good grasp of the word of God. But I have to facilitate a group tonight full of men and women who are being eaten alive by the consequences of their own sin. It feels like I am in a constant battle on their behalf. What am I fighting for for them, and what does that look like?”

WGA is fighting to make Truth to be known. We must fight against “*arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.*” (2Cor10-5a)

How? Fighting for truth in our little corner of the world has everything to do with speaking and teaching about God's standards for healthy sexuality, and providing an environment where people can come to explore, commit to, and live up to this truth together. This speaking and teaching is constantly under fire. For example, just saying

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that God has a standard for sexuality is considered hate speech in ever-widening circles. In the face of this reality, this year, WGA is offering our repertoire of classes and seminars to the Church at large. We are taking the initiative and inviting pastors and churches to partner with us to make Truth known.

WGA is fighting to offer God's grace. *"Where sin increased, grace increased all the more."* (Ro 5:20)

How? I have heard grace called **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. The war against Grace is vicious. The enemy seeks to dilute or divert grace away from those who need it most, replacing it with judgment and condemnation. Pushing back against this onslaught involves rebuking condemnation, constantly offering forgiveness and a place to belong and to heal. The battle requires personal and sacrificial investment in people's lives whether they ever reciprocate or not. Grace is "caught rather than taught," so WGA creates an environment where people can "soak in grace," as one of our former leaders described it.

WGA is fighting for an eternal perspective in daily life. We advocate for the practice of the presence of God for ourselves and for those the Lord brings to us.

How? As we plug away together through the daily-ness of life, we are witnesses to the reality of a living, active God who wants to be known. We offer the word of our testimony (life giving to hearer and speaker). And in the offering, we shall overcome. (Rev 12:11) Again turning to Peterson for illustration of this:

"People who live by faith have a particularly acute sense of living 'in the middle.' We believe that God is at the beginning of all things, and we believe that God is at the conclusion of all life—in St. John's striking epigram: 'the Alpha and the Omega' (Rev. 1:8). It is routine among us to assume that the beginning was good . . . It is agreed among us that the conclusion will be good. . . The pastor is the person who specializes in accompanying persons of faith 'in the middle,' facing the ugly details, the meaningless routines the mocking wickedness, and all the time doggedly insisting that this unaccountably unlovely middle is connected to a splendid beginning and a glorious ending." ii

WGA staff and leaders are parakletes (ones who come alongside) group members and the Church alike as we fight the Lamb's war.

There is so much more I want to

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say about the Lamb's War. But time and space dictate otherwise. I will offer three favorite resources though. Any readers who want to know more about the Lamb's War, I suggest that you read, *The Mark of a Christian*, by Francis Schaeffer, *Bold Love*, by Dan Allender, and *The Lamb's War*, by Jan D'Hartog.

One final comment: **The Lamb's War looks suspiciously like radical obedience** to Jesus' two commandments to love God and one another. The Lamb's War is then a

"long obedience in the same direction."ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Luke 22:50-51; John 18:10-11

ⁱⁱ *Reversed Thunder*, Eugene H Peterson, p 164

ⁱⁱⁱ *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, Eugene H. Peterson. -20th Anniversary Edition 2000

Mark your calendars for the WGA Family
and Friends Gathering!

Date: Saturday April 25th

Time: 4-9 PM

For more details, please call the WGA office at
303-863-7757



February At a Glance

February 19th & 20th: WGA presented at Barclay College

February 10th, 17th, & 24th: Mary Heathman taught on the character of God at Abundant Life Christian Center

February 22nd: WGA hosted a luncheon for pastors at our offices. 25 attended!

Thursday Night Group

February 5th: 45

February 12th: 38

February 19th: 32

February 26th: 41

Orientation meeting: 2

March And Beyond

March 13th & 14th: Christians and Sexuality seminar

March 26th & 27th: WGA presenting at Denver County Jail

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

April 4th: Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 7:00 - 9:00 am at the WGA offices.

April 25th: WGA Family and Friends Gathering

WGA Staff

Roger Jones
Executive Director

Scott Kingry
Program Director

Janet Moine
Asst 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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