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# A Measure of *Grace*

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

## Self Hatred

*by Roger Jones*

**T**his month, I want to address the area of our physical bodies. I must confess that I have not spent much time in front of the mirror thanking God for the glorious body He created for me. In fact, I have spent a lot of time practicing self hatred. For many years, one of my complaints with God went something like, “Why am I so skinny, God? It’s not fair that other men look like (handsome guy of the week), and I look like this!”

It seemed to me that I went quickly from being underweight to overweight. (I think I was at my “ideal” weight for the large part of one day.) My complaints continued, “It’s still not fair, God! Why can’t I have a body like blah, blah, blah.” It was truly maddening at times.

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Adding to my problems of self image, pornography has been a major area of struggle for me. One of the consequences of using pornography was that it reinforced my self hatred. The “stars” in those films and magazines don’t usually have regular bodies, or even real ones. The time and energy I spent idealizing and idolizing was often focused on the areas in which I felt I was lacking (biceps, abs, etc...). By doing this, I was continually telling myself that I wasn’t good enough, my body wasn’t perfect enough, and no one would love me the way I am.

It isn’t just pornography that helps us feed self hatred and body shame. Billboards, magazines, and television seem to be telling us the same thing. We aren’t beautiful enough or handsome enough or “whatever” enough. We do this to one another as well. As I make self deprecating comments about my own appearance, those around me are forced to either deal with my warped perceptions of myself,

or they are reminded of their own self image issues. Can a potential spouse ever measure up to an air-brushed image or the idea of perfection we each have in our own minds? Self-hatred demands perfection and will settle for nothing less.

Over the years, I grew accustomed to self hatred. In fact, there are times it still seems pretty comfort-

able to me. If I begin to feel good about my body and the way I look, I quickly switch to feeling uncomfortable. Somehow, feeling good about myself makes me feel bad. My subconscious takes over, and I begin to make choices that lead me back into my “comfort zone” of the familiar self

hatred. I find myself eating more fast food. I feel depressed, so it is hard to get up in the morning. My exercise plan gets thrown out the window and I skip breakfast, because I didn’t get up early enough for either of them.

As you can see, this is a trap within my own cycle of body

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*(Self Hatred continued from page 2)*

shame. I want to look and feel a certain way, but when I make efforts to move towards that goal, I sabotage myself. My motives are often a mixture of good and bad. I want to be healthy, but I also want to look “good” so that people will respond to me in a certain way. God, please purify my motives!

Clearly, the problem is more than skin deep. I had (have) an identity issue. This is a much bigger issue than simply the way I see myself or the way I perceive that others see me. If I truly believed that I was a child of God and was secure in that belief, would I constantly be moving back and forth in these crazy-making mind games?

I offer the following Scriptures for you to ponder with the topic of self hatred in mind. I pray that you and I will truly begin to believe that God purposefully made each of us. What could we be if we truly believed?

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pat-

tern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Philippians 3:12-21

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 139:14 (New International Version)

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

## Judging: Not Our Job

By Mary Heathman

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**I**t has been said that nagging is reminding someone of something they haven't yet forgotten. It is my hope you haven't forgotten these scriptural principles about judging. I am reminding you of them in this article. If you haven't forgotten yet, or don't appreciate the reminder—please forgive me for nagging!

*"Do not judge,  
or you too will be judged.  
For in the same way  
you judge others,  
you will be judged, and  
with the measure you use,  
it will be measured to you."*  
(Mt 7:1-2, NIV)

AND HE SAID IT AGAIN:

*"Do not judge, and  
you will not be judged.  
Do not condemn, and  
you will not be condemned.  
Forgive, and  
you will be forgiven.  
Give, and  
it will be given to you.  
A good measure,  
pressed down,  
shaken together and  
running over,*

*will be poured into your lap.  
For with the measure you use,  
it will be measured to you."*  
(Luke 6:37-38)

AND AGAIN:

*You, therefore,  
have no excuse,  
you who pass judgment  
on someone else,  
for at whatever point  
you judge the other,  
you are condemning yourself,  
because you who pass judgment  
do the same things.  
Now we know that  
God's judgment against those  
who do such things  
is based on truth.  
(Ro 2:1-2, NIV)*

If I understand the verses correctly, the God of the universe, the Alpha and Omega, reserves for Himself the role of Judge, and he starts by judging the judges! The verses also clearly promise that the degree of judgment, or the degree of generosity, we exercise toward others is the same degree that will be poured out on us.

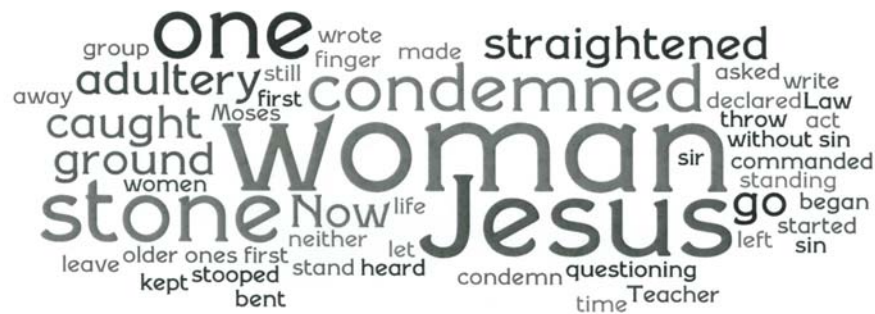
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I am reminded of something Anne Kimmel once said, quoting Frances Willard, the founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement: "I used to be intolerant of people; now I am only intolerant of people who are intolerant of people." That's the stage I am in, I am afraid—still judging!

I will wrap up my reminder (or nagging session) with another quote. Martin Luther once said, “Even my repentance needs to be repented of.” This may be true for you; but I know it is true for me, and my confession is offered here—Lord, forgive me for judging people, for trying to dig the sawdust out of their

eyes, when my own eyes are full of planks (Mt 7:3). Thank you that it is your kindness that led me to repentance; and thank you for the privilege of offering kindness to others as you draw them to yourself. May your Truth and Grace work its power into my heart and mind, and then may it overflow to hydrate a world that is as thirsty for You as I am.”

[Note: This topic was inspired by reading the article on page 4 of this newsletter, Friends of Nuts of Outcasts, by Franklin Castle. We are grateful to Prison Fellowship for the permission to reprint.)



## John 8: 1-11

<http://www.wordle.net/>

## Friend of Nuts and Outcasts

*By Franklin Castle*

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An inmate nudged his buddy who was sitting next to him at the dining room table, and shot a quick glance in my direction.

“How did we end up sitting at the same table with all these crazy people from the nut block?” he complained.

I chose not to respond, but rather, acted as though I had not even heard the hurtful comment.

So this is what the poor guys on the special-needs unit have to put up with each and every day, I thought.

What those two guys did not realize was that I was a general-population inmate like them. I was housed on the SNU only to provide literacy services to the inmates living there. A part of me wanted to snap back and give these guys a piece of my mind, but then I was reminded of the warning from the Bible: “Answer not a fool according to his folly,

lest thou also be like unto him” (Proverbs 26:4).

Later, as I reflected on all that had happened, I began to feel honored that I had actually shared in the humiliation of my students. After all, I reasoned, wasn’t Jesus reproached for being a friend of sinners? Wasn’t He actually called a sinner for doing good?

In fact, a day seldom goes by that I don’t overhear other inmates making fun of or belittling those on the SNU. Sometimes the ridicule is directed at me by inmates who mistakenly think that I’m one of those “nuts,” too.

Or maybe I am. I don’t really care anymore. In fact, the inmates on the SNU are some of the most sensitive, “for real” people that I have ever encountered in prison. It still angers me, though, that inmates are often so quick to put others down. Such individuals

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clearly don't respect themselves. One day after I had just finished tutoring a convicted sex offender, a friend of mine who is serving a life sentence stepped into the block dayroom.

"Frank," he started, "you sure are a better man than I am. I couldn't stand to be around that guy."

I thought for a moment how best to answer him. "Just remember," I finally said, "our victims are dead. At least his is still alive. Who are we to judge anyone?" My friend couldn't answer me and simply walked away.

Rev. David Bowen, the Protestant chaplain here, recently addressed this tendency of inmates to put others down. We were singing the hymn "I Want to Be Like Jesus," which contains the line: "He welcomed sinners to His breast." After we sang those words, Rev. Bowen motioned for us to stop singing.

"Who were the sinners whom Jesus welcomed to His breast?" he asked the men gathered in the room. "The apostles," one man replied. "Sinners and social rejects," said another.

Rev. Bowen looked around for a moment at the men sitting in the chapel. "Are there any people you know whom you can't stand to be around?" he asked. Jesus

welcomed the nuts of society to His breast. How can Christians, who call ourselves by His name, do less?

Franklin Castle, a lifer who has been in prison for 27 years, works as a literacy tutor on the special-needs unit at SCI-Smithfield in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.





## May

### At a Glance

**May 6th and 13th:** WGA taught on sexuality, gender and relationships at Wellspring Anglican Church

**May 19th:** WGA hosted pastor training on Ministry to the Homosexual Struggler

**May 30th:** WGA night at the Rockies Game

#### Thursday Night Group

**May 7th:** 30 people

**May 14th:** 34 people

**May 21st:** 25 people

**May 28th:** 34 people

**Orientation meeting:** 3 new people

## June

### And Beyond

**June 11th:** Roger presenting at Jubilee Church

**June 21st:** WGA speaking at Little Chapel of the Hills

**July 8th:** WGA presenting at Friends middle school camp and senior high camp

**July 11th:** Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 7:00 - 9:00 am at the WGA offices.

**July 21st:** WGA Pastor Training Event

**July 27th-31st:** Mary speaking at Bear Trap Ranch Retreat

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*A Measure of Grace*  
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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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