



A Measure of Grace

February 2010
Volume 14, Issue 2

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

Reaching Out to the Sexually Broken

by Roger Jones

I am often asked questions about how to reach out to homosexuals. Typically, the question comes from a person who has a gay neighbor, coworker or a family member. I believe that many of the same principles apply to reaching out to anyone, whether they are homosexual or heterosexual. As Christians, we are often put off by sexual issues. I'm not always sure why this is so, because my experience with WGA has proven that Christians have plenty of sexual problems of their own! I suppose that is the root of the problem. We often feel shame or confusion about our own sexual feelings (or lack thereof), because the typical Christian church is not perceived to be a safe place to be real. "Am I the only one in my church with these desires and feelings? I must be, since no one else is talking about them." Our own strong mixed feelings and fears about our own sexuality cause us to feel uncomfortable around those who are sexually broken.

Sy Rogers, who is an international speaker on sexual

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issues, tells a story about a man who described his attempts to witness to his gay neighbors. His goal was to let his neighbors know how he felt about their lifestyle by scowling disapprovingly every time he saw them. We know the Scripture says it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. This man's approach may sound silly, but I wonder how often we unintentionally repeat this behavior, because we are uncomfortable and unsure about what to do.

There are some basic things to be aware of when reaching out:

Challenge perceptions.

Ask God to help you to see through your own stereotypes, prejudices, and fears. Work to separate the person from the issue. For example, you may be repulsed by the issue of pornography, but remember that there are reasons this person has gotten caught up in this particular struggle.

It is also important to challenge the perceptions of the person to whom you are reaching out. I recently read a study of how non-Christians age 16-29 view present-day Christianity.¹ In this study, "Antihomosexual" topped the list of how Christians are perceived. "Judgmental" and "Hypocritical" were the next two on the list. We know this isn't God's heart. We have a public relations problem here. We have our work cut out for us, particularly when these are the assumptions made about us.

Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Community Church, has been quoted as

saying, "There are two basic reasons people don't know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. One, they have never met a Christian. Second, they have met a Christian."² Our actions speak louder than our words.

Don't have double standards. I mentioned earlier that one of the perceptions of Christians is that we are hypocrites. When we say one thing, yet do another, we are confusing to people. This does not mean that we should compromise on what we know is the truth. It does mean that we need to show the whole picture.

It feels safe to share the first part, "The Bible says that the only acceptable sexual relationship is between a man and a woman in marriage." What we often leave out is the second part of the story, "I struggle with the standard God has set before us in these ways..." When a Christian leader falls sexually, it is devastating. I believe the impact would be far less negative if our leaders could and would be honest about their struggles.

A big area where we have double standards is in how we view sin. Some sins are more palatable to us than others. A parent may allow their unmarried, heterosexual son to share a room with his live-in girlfriend when visiting for the holidays but draw the line when it comes to their gay son bringing home his partner. We need to be consistent in our message against sinful behavior, including our own. God did not set up a hierarchy of small and large sins. We should not do so either.

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Be a Friend. Part of being a friend is building trust. We need to earn the right to speak into the lives of others. Trying to start a relationship with, “I’d like to be your friend, but I need you to know that I think you are in sin,” will likely get a door slammed in your face. Instead, we could simply say “I’d like to be your friend,” and then let our values be revealed over time as they would naturally unfold in any other relationship. We have to find ways to connect, and if we are unwilling to be transparent about our own lives and struggles, our efforts will be in vain. It takes time to build relationships, and there is no short cut to building the trust needed to deeply impact the life of someone else.

I hope these few suggestions will be helpful to you in your efforts to reach

out. I truly believe that we must demonstrate the love of Christ, not just tell people about it. As we reflect His love, men and women will be drawn to the light shining within us. Bless you in your efforts to love those God brings your way!

¹*Unchristian: what a new generation really thinks about Christianity...and why it matters*, David Kinnaman and Dave Lyons, published by Baker Books, 2007

² *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would: A Fresh Christian Approach*, Chad W. Thompson, published by Brazos Press, 2004, pg. 11



“I have discovered that I am never going to arrive!” The words were spoken with passion and urgency. The young girl was sixteen, and had risen to speak during the open worship time of our Sunday morning service. She continued, “The point of my life here on earth isn’t about a destination I will reach this side of heaven, but a path I will walk with Jesus and with all of you.”

I open this article with a teenager’s words, because it was through her testimony that the Lord sparked my interest in *walking with Him* rather than *working*

Holiness Journey *By Mary Heathman*

for Him. As written previously, “*As we walk with the Lord closely and continuously, we are His disciples and He pours his life into us. The result of this relationship is our sanctification; holiness comes alive in us; He becomes greater and greater, while our old nature becomes less and less. This is the way we become holy.*”ⁱ

As promised, this month I will present some thoughts on God’s part in our journey, specifically regarding the Holiness Mandate.ⁱⁱ My thoughts will be meager in the face of the task, but my purpose is

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lofty: to remind us all that God walks with us on our journey; He is actively working on our behalf; we can count on that.

Isaiah writesⁱⁱⁱ that our journey in this life is through a desert, a wilderness, where we are often weary in body and soul. The land, though beautiful in seasons, shows itself periodically as the wasteland it is, and our throats are parched with thirst, our hands feeble and our hearts fearful.

It is in this context that Isaiah describes the presence of the Lord in this place. *“Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.” “And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness.”*^{iv} Along this highway, we walk with Him and with each other. And in the process we become more and more what He created us to be—in His likeness, according to His design and purposes, living out our lives—*“holy lives, not because of anything we have done, but because of His own purpose and grace.”*^v

And to what purpose was this grace given? For our salvation, of course, but also, *“I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.”*^{vi}

It catches my breath away, almost paralyzes my thoughts to think that the Lord Himself wants me to walk with Him and He wants to live in me. Through this life in Him and He in me, my own redeemed unholiness will be the instrument through which He chooses to show Himself to the

nations. Christ in me—His holiness in us—will draw the world to Him!

You would think that this glorious Truth would capture all my attention and all of my energies would be focused on attending to Him and my brothers and sisters along the road. At this point, I have visions of all of us skipping along together in joy and delight all the way to heaven.

Sadly, though my spirit is willing, I get caught up the wilderness and all its troubles and temptations. I find myself not really expecting Jesus to be holy in my unholiness. It is mind-boggling how quickly I can return to former patterns of thinking like, *“I can do it myself from here on out.”* When I am in that state of mind, I don’t ask Him daily to **be** holiness in me, forgetting that it is only His holiness in me that can tame my sin nature.

What can a person do with this propensity to forget, to wander off the road, or at least to glance long and hard at the alternative—a life back in the old life where at least there was . . . what, exactly? I could write long about this propensity – because I know it well. But words escape me when I think of God’s part in the Holiness Mandate.

It is finished. He has done it. He paid the price. When I confess, He has already forgiven; He is right at hand whenever I choose to look for Him. He eagerly pours out His grace; shepherds His children with grace and truth. He has everything covered already—His part is to stay close, inviting us deeper into Him. When we look, He finds us; whether we look or not, He is looking for us, preparing a way for us. And He is working on our behalf—usually **in** us, in our hearts, not on the circumstances we are trying to pray away.

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And now a few thoughts on really good news according to Hebrews, Chapter Ten, and John, Chapter Seventeen—(read both chapters, it is all in there. And if you find a discrepancy or error in my take on it, please let me know. We will have a fruitful conversation, I am sure!)

Jesus set aside the old way of atonement—annual blood sacrifices—and became the sacrifice for all time. In response, we can set aside our old way of living righteously—by our own strength; righteousness by avoidance, or whitewashing the outward appearance of our behavior—in favor of becoming one with Him. He in us, we in Him, even as the Father and Son are one, we can be one with Him.

And we can give up a big chunk of our beloved independence and individualism and allow the Holy Spirit to yoke us together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. In this way, Christ in us encourages one another, builds one another up, and holds one another accountable to staying the course!

So, a holy God, through His son, Jesus, indwells an unholy people who have been made holy in Christ! Understanding this, we can set aside our own “righteousness” as the filthy rags they are in comparison to His. As Christ dwells in us—perfection, holiness is being worked in us by Him.

And lest you think I have forgotten we have a part: it is our job to draw near to God with sincere hearts, knowing we have been forgiven. It is for us to “hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.” As R. C. Sproul often says, “A Christian’s work

is not over as soon as he has got into a state of grace; he must still hope and strive for more grace.”

Our yearning must be for more of this grace, for His holiness. As is expressed in a popular praise song by Scott Underwood:

*Holiness, holiness is what I long for,
Holiness is what I need.
Holiness, holiness is what you want from me.
Take my heart and form it,
Take my mind, transform it,
Take my will, conform it,
To Yours, to Yours, O Lord.”^{vii}*

The prayer yearning for Him, for His holiness—that is our part. The holiness working its way through us—that is His part. May we all do encourage each other to do our part, and to trust Him for the rest—for what only He can do!

ⁱHeathman, M. (2010) Holiness Impossible. Measure of Grace Newsletter. Denver: Where Grace Abounds.

ⁱⁱHeathman, M. (2009) Holiness Mandate. Measure of Grace Newsletter. Denver: Where Grace Abounds.

ⁱⁱⁱ Isaiah, Chapter 35, NIV.

^{iv} Isaiah 35: 6-8

^v Tim 1:9

^{vi} Eze 36:23

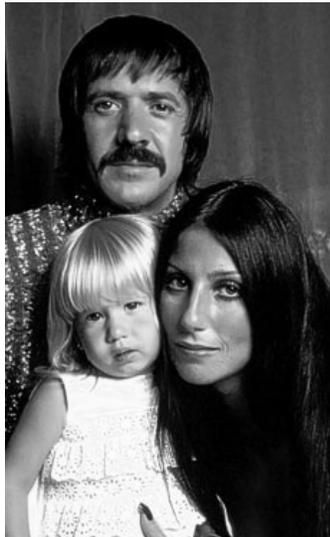
^{vii} Scott Underwood, Holiness is what I long for. Copyright © 1994, Mercy/Vineyard Publishing.

Gender Benders

By Scott Kingry



Remember the Sonny and Cher Variety Hour? I vividly recall watching it as a kid growing up in the 70's. Sonny, with his porn star moustache and polyester bell bottoms, would always play straight man to Cher's wise-cracking bantering during their opening monologues. That's when Cher was great--wearing her glittery Bob Mackie gowns, still with her fabulous crooked nose, and before all the plastic surgeries. True to most variety shows of the era, after all the comedy skits, musical interludes and guest stars, the show would conclude with an intimate time with the audience. A small, pixie-haired girl held in Sonny's arms, her face buried in her father's chest most times, would join the couple on stage to sing "I Got You Babe" and say goodnight. This was their daughter Chastity. Over the next several dec-



ades, Chastity would be outed as lesbian, become a gay rights advocate and is now in the first stages of gender reassignment surgery to become a man--currently going by the name "Chaz." I often wonder what happened to that little, shy blonde girl?

There are many places within me that can resonate with how Chastity has felt and how time, consequences and choices could lead someone to come to that very drastic conclusion. Several dynamics converged when I was young that led to an early "gender confusion." The men around me seemed passive, unemotional and ineffectual. Conversely, it appeared to me that the women actually had the control, made the decisions and not only ran the show, but could exert their sexuality to make men do all sorts of ridiculous things. I'm sure I concluded with my small brain that I had to be where the power was, so I began detaching from everything male--activities, games, even my own body. I got the daily, clear message from most everyone around me that I was a failure as a boy and added to the mix was my mild, artistic temperament (as opposed to "rough and tumble"). Naturally it felt safer to be with the girls on the playground. I felt more emotionally similar to them anyway. Like Chastity, I was led by the decades, the choices and these early influences and wounds to pursue homosexuality, a life in the Gay community, activism and eventually to question whether I was male or female. In my early twenties, I remember entertaining the thought that the outside didn't

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seem to match the inside—had God made a mistake?—should I pursue gender re-assignment surgery?

At this current writing you know that God did intervene in that decision making process—cuz I’m still a guy. Coming to Where Grace Abounds shortly after these questions were forming gave me an environment to become educated. I began to tackle the issues that were causing the incongruence between how I was created and my own feelings. Beyond the easy roles and stereotypes we can find safety in—gender and God’s purposes for it, have a mysterious element. Chastity is often quoted as saying, “Gender is between your ears and not your legs.” Well, she’s kind of right—let’s look at some of the definitions we teach at our Thursday night group.

Biological Identity-Your physically designated sex: Male or Female (between your legs)

Gender Identity- How you feel or perceive yourself as Male or Female—how masculine or feminine you feel—(between your ears)

Sexual Orientation-Who you feel romantically, sexually aroused by or physically attracted towards.

Seeing these pieces as separate, yet sometimes overlapping influences can make the whole gender puzzle confusing at times. To omit any of these components from the equation is simplistic and does not get the full picture. So these definitions at least gave me a place to start untangling things. When it came to my physical body and how I felt about it, my masculinity and my attractions, I realized that there were a myriad of false



beliefs, wounds and vows made as I was growing up. All that needed some resolution. The most important thing for me to connect with and internalize throughout my years of healing has been God’s particular intent and design for gender and sexuality. Somewhere along the way, I’ve gotten vision that I was created to be born in 1963, in America, in Denver and that God has unique purposes for my life to be lived out **as a male**. I’m not a mistake, as I had felt so much of my life. What a comfort that is.

God’s Image lives in us as male and female (Genesis 1:27). A major purpose of the enemy is to destroy His Image on earth by attacking, confusing and discounting the way we live out our gender as men and women. None of us are perfect males and females, so we need places and forums like Where Grace Abounds to sort it all out and to catch God’s vision for each of us personally. I will be prayerful and interested to see how Chastity’s story will continue to unfold. All I know is that I’m hopeful, and God continues to be at work in all of us as “The Beat Goes On.”



January At a Glance

January 8th: Commitment Group Began

January 16th: Survivors of Abuse Group Began

January 24th: WGA presented at Cherry Hills Community Church

Thursday Night Group

January 7th: 37 people

January 14th: 49 people

January 21st: 30 people

January 28th: 45 people

Orientation meeting: 4 new people

February And Beyond

February 4th: WGA presenting at Campus Crusade

February 20th: WGA presenting at a volunteer training for HIV CareLink

March 6th: Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 7:00-9:00 am at the WGA offices

March 16th: WGA hosting a Pastor/Ministry leader training on the topic "Transparency in Ministry"

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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.

Printed in the USA
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