



A Measure of Grace

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WGA Update *By Roger Jones*

This month, in place of my usual “topic of the month” article, I decided to use this opportunity to update you on a few things that are happening around the ministry. It is exciting to be a part of a ministry where God is so clearly at work, changing lives and restoring wounded men, women, and families.

Our **Thursday Night Group** continues to be well attended, with between 30 and 40 men and women joining us each week. Over the past several weeks, we’ve had a number of really good presentations from guest speakers and regular speakers as well. Recent topics have included addiction, a pastor’s perspective on the issue of homosexuality, and grief. Of course, we have our regular 12 week cycle of Foundations classes

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

WGA Update	1
WGA In Action	3
Reflections	4
Financial Update	8
Oct and Beyond	8

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(Update continued from page 1)

ongoing too. If you haven't been to our group in awhile (or ever), now is a great time to come by for a visit. Let us know and we'll make arrangements for you to do so.

On October 30th, there will be a gathering for **Family and Friends**. Steve and Jill, our faithful leaders of this group, will be hosting the event in their home.

The holiday season is rapidly approaching, and we thought it would be a good time to gather to discuss how to navigate through some potentially difficult and painful family dynamics during this season of family gatherings and travel. If you are seeking help in this area or if you have some insights that you'd like to share with others, please contact us. We will make sure you get the appropriate information about this gathering.

Last month, our group called **Going Deeper with God** began. There is a large group participating this year! This group is addressing going deeper with God and developing intimacy with Him. The aim is to help each participant be real,

to develop vision for God's Reality, and to help each other in the transition between where they are now and where they want to be with God, each other and themselves. This group will continue through November.

January seems a long way off, but it will be here quickly! This is the month when we kick off a couple of short-term groups that we offer

each year. We will have a **Men's Commitment Group** and a **Survivors of Abuse Group**. One of the prerequisites for participation in these is for interested men and women to go through a series of Discipleship Counseling with us. These meetings are already underway! Please pray for those considering these

groups.

At the end of October, there will be a change coming to our staff. **Janet Moine** has been serving part-time as the Assistant Program Director for about 3 years now. She recently began working part-time for another ministry in Denver called WiseChoices. There is an opportunity for her to work more hours there, and she has

(Continued on page 3)

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(Update continued from page 2)

prayerfully felt that this is the right time and opportunity for her.

Though the hours she has been able to give here have been limited to 10 hours each week, Janet's influence and presence have been beneficial. In particular, her teaching and participation in discipleship counseling have been most appreciated. Please pray for Janet as she transitions into a new job. And please pray for the remaining staff and leadership as we adjust to a smaller staff.

Thank you all for your prayers and financial support of WGA. The past couple of years have been a challenge for many ministries, including WGA. I am pleased to report that **God has been faithful to provide for WGA!** You may recall previous reports where I shared with you some of our planning and budgeting process. This year, we are operating on a reduced/simplified budget, as we did in 2009 as well. Time and again, I have been amazed by how God leads us through this process. Through July, income was right on target with our projections. As of the end of September, our income is about \$7,000 less than we predicted for the year to date. Would

you please pray with us about this as well?

This year, the Staff, Board of Directors, and Leadership Team have been doing some fun exercises in thinking about **the future of WGA**. We've each been given the questions, "When you think about WGA ten years from now, what is the ministry doing? What is WGA known for?" Some really creative ideas have come from this process.

We are only partway through this process now, so I won't give away any of the ideas just yet. But, I am excited to hear about the growing vision that God has planted in the hearts and minds of WGA's leaders. Will you dream with us?

In closing, I want to thank you for your interest in WGA and our mission. These are just a few of the things that are happening around here. It is such a privilege to do the work that God has laid before us, reaching out to those struggling with painful sexual and relationship issues. Please let us know if we can help you!

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Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks



Retreat. Or not.

I attended a retreat a few weeks ago . . . to be more accurate, it was less a “retreat” and more a “frontal attack.” I knew the weekend was intended to be a safe place to find deep connection with God and healing. But I’d heard that promise before in my four decades of various church memberships and I was skeptical. Deeply skeptical. The problem was, I was also so deeply filled with pain, longing, and general spiritual blockage that I needed it to be true. The need was so great that once stirred I couldn’t stuff the hope back into its safe, dark little box and keep it quiet. This created a terrifying vulnerability for me. My hope was exposed – a sad, rag-clad little thing swaying in the harsh wind of reality and squinting at the blinding light of my merciless days.

I wanted to know that the pain and confusion I struggle with is real and not slight or silly or imaginary. I wanted to know that God sees this sad little, vulnerable heart of

me and that it stirs him with compassion. Towards me.

And hope against hope, I wanted to know if it was possible, maybe, just maybe, to experience some healing and freedom.

I was terrified. I was so scared to be disappointed. So afraid that what I hope for is something that only happens for mass murderers in “Damascus Road” conversions who will go on to be televangelists. . . I was so afraid that God would say, “buck up, sister. This is your thorn in the flesh and you are destined to limp with it through the pearly gates in 40 years or so.” I was even more afraid of silence – in my head, in my heart, in my spirit, from God.

After a night of tossing and turning, I got up at two in the morning a week or so before the weekend and emailed the registration woman that I had changed my mind and couldn’t come. She sent back a really gracious email (which was really irritating, because any other kind of a response would have helped me dig in my heels) that was warm and inviting

(Continued on page 5)

(Reflections continued from page 4)

and accepting of whatever I decided. She was a melody of possibility that stirred this irrepressible hope . . . again. I left her email open and agonized for 2 days and finally emailed her back and said I would come. But I drove my own car and refused to carpool because I wanted a way of escape if it was awful. I made it through Friday afternoon, then Friday evening, I didn't sleep that night. Then Saturday morning the fear crashed over me in tidal waves. I sat in a room full of people hyperventilating and trying to stifle my sobbing: "What if God doesn't care? What if He doesn't show up? What if I want a connection that is simply impossible?" I almost left. I almost went home.

And then, that afternoon, He showed up. He showed up for me. He saw me. He let me know I was safe. That I had what I needed because He had been building it in me. He wrapped a robe around my rag-clad, vulnerable hope and held me close, shielded against the wind.

These are only words, of course. It is very difficult to find words for wordless hurts that go deeper than vowels and paragraphs and idioms. It is even more difficult to limit the comfort in those deep

places to mere human expression. How can you describe the quiet moaning and longing and fear in your heart? And How can you describe a comfort and a balm that is so intimately crafted to cover your unique wounds that you know you will never feel completely alone again?

I have many friends who labor under the weight of deep questions. To you I say, "what you long for is not slight, imaginary, silly or impossible." I have had a tiny sip of what is intended recently. It is . . . well, you'll have to taste it for yourself. I can't describe it.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." Eph 3:20&21

WGA In Action

by Mary Heathman



I am always on the lookout for ways I can show our newsletter readers what actually happens on a day to day basis at WGA. Putting myself in a supporter's shoes, I think, "what do they do; how do they help people; how are they serving the Body of Christ . . . ?"

Most of our readers know about WGA support groups, our teachings, our speaking and our pastors' events. But it occurs to me you may not be aware how much we are active behind the scenes in supporting, training and equipping our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. Questions come our way often, by phone, through email, sometimes as we simply live out our testimonies in our personal lives.

One such question recently came my way, and it occurred to me that sharing the email exchange might be a way to illustrate how the Lord works through us. Here is the email exchange, almost exactly as it was written, though I have changed details that might identify the person who wrote me:

In a message dated 10/11/2010 8:30:31 A.M. Mountain Daylight Time, [a grandmother] writes:

Mary -

I enjoyed WGA's presentation at

my church.

I need to pick your brain. One of my grandsons mentioned some concern about "catching gay." I was at a loss how to best respond/reassure/?/or what. Any suggestions?

Thanks!!

Elizabeth

====

From:

mary@wheregraceabounds.org

Date: Mon, 11 Oct 2010 12:51:51 - 0400

Subject: Re: question

To: [a grandmother]

Hi, Elizabeth,

Thanks so much for your encouraging words—glad to know people are hearing and appreciating our message.

How old is your grand-son? Although I don't know that his age would tell me much, as kids these days are exposed to so much, so early! But it would be good if I knew what exactly he said, and if he asked you in private, or was this a comment at the dinner table with everybody or . . . ? In

(Continued on page 7)

(WGA in Action continued from page 6)

the meantime, just off the top of my head, I think I would suggest that you at least be sure to make a few points like:

"I was thinking about what you said the other day about 'catching gay' and I just wanted to let you know that being gay isn't something you can 'catch.' But sexuality is something that can be confusing when you are growing up and becoming a man. Lots of questions come up during this time in your life, so you are smart to ask about it as young as you are. Many people keep confusing feelings a secret. And when they do that, they never find out the facts that they need to know, and then they make decisions based on wrong information. You can talk to me anytime about this. For instance, I would like to know more about why you are wondering about this. Also, anytime you want to know more about sex or being 'gay' I can get some information that would answer your questions. Or if you want to talk to someone who used to live his life gay and now doesn't, then I could arrange that too."

Elizabeth, I hope this is helpful – obviously, you know your grandson and I don't. So of course the questions and comments will have to be tailored to fit his and your circumstances. What I have offered is just what I might say to my

grandson if he asked—if he let me get past the first time I said "gay" or "sexuality!" If you have further questions, feel free to contact me again.

Blessings,
Mary

=====

From: [a grandmother]
To: Mary Heathman
<mary@wheregraceabounds.org>
Sent: Tue, Oct 12, 2010 8:55 am
Subject: RE: question

Thanks. It was one of the older boys in a relatively casual conversation. You gave me good ideas. I think I'll let the topic come to me and share your insights with [my daughter, his mother].

Elizabeth

It is a privilege to serve in such personal and targeted ways. It is our prayer that the Lord will use these questions and answers in every-widening ways—that Elizabeth would be comforted and equipped in her relationship with her family and that she would be an agent of truth and grace in her family, that they in turn would react from a wiser place when talking with each other and their friends about sexuality. I pray also that the Lord's grace and truth will go out in ripple effects beyond where we could ask or imagine, starting from these small conversations that go on every day around WGA, and moving out into all the world!

It could happen! I read about it in a paper on Complexity Theory—it's called the butterfly effect—look it up!



Financial Update

**YTD Projected Income (thru
September) \$176,450**

**YTD Actual Income (thru September)
\$169,382**

Budget Shortfall: \$7,068

October And Beyond

**October 10th - Mary will be speaking during the
main service at First Friends Church in Colorado
Springs**

**October 10th: WGA participating in Missions
Event at Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church**

October 15-17th: WGA Leadership Retreat

**November 6th - Intercessory Prayer. Join us from
800 - 9:00 am at the WGA offices.**

**November 13th: Mary teaching at "How Change
Happens" at "Conversations on Healthy Sexuality"
conference at Denver Seminary**

Thursday Night Group

September 2nd: 45 people

September 9th: 41 people

September 16th: 34 people

September 23rd: 36 people

September 30th: 39 people

**Orientation meeting—2 new
people**

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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