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A Measure of *Grace*

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Resting in the Love of God

by Roger Jones

For many of us who deal with sexual issues, believing that God loves us can be difficult. Sometimes the shame we carry over things we have done or things that have been done to us feels like a wall that even God cannot breach. Fortunately, this is not the truth, but rather, a lie that Satan wants us to believe.

Sexual abuse can cause people to feel either that they are worthless or that the only value they have is sexual. One who has lived a life of secrecy, whether because of an affair or an addiction which no one knows about, may feel that God is not available to her, or that unless he cleans himself up enough, he is unacceptable to God.

Most of the men and women (myself included)

(Continued on page 2)



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(Resting continued from page 1)

who have believed these lies can easily accept the truth for other people. God's love and grace are so easy to see when we are talking about someone else. For some reason, it is harder to believe the truth for ourselves: God loves us.

About four years ago, I began meeting regularly with a pastor for spiritual direction. It has been beneficial and thought provoking for me to have a recurring time in which to touch base about spiritual issues, in particular the goal of making God my life's central figure, rather than me. I have known the pastor I meet with for a long time, and I am grateful for his investment in me and my relationship with God.

One of the first spiritual directions I was given was to "rest in the love of God." This was not an easy task for me then, and it is still a struggle for me now. When I pause and try to imagine how much God loves me, my mind immediately fills with all the reasons that He should not love me. It is a discipline to continue to bring my mind back to the truth of His love and acceptance. This is truly an exercise in renewing my mind and taking every thought captive.

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Below are some Scriptures that I have found helpful to read through and meditate upon. I encourage you to join me in this exercise. If and when the peripheral thoughts of self condemnation or everyday distractions began to work their way into your consciousness, simply confess the truth of these Scriptures and bring yourself back into focus. Rest there in the love of God. All references are taken from the NIV.

"How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings" (Psalm 36:7.)

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (I

John 4:7-8.)

"And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5.)

"I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me" (Proverbs 8:17.)

"But because of his great love for

(Continued on page 3)

(Resting continued from page 2)

us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4-5.)

“Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:34-39.)

“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians

3:17-19.)

“May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance” (II Thessalonians 3:5.)

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us” (I John 4:9-16.)

Reflections: Thoughts from a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

This month Nancy shares a poem with us:

In the Image of My Father
Gerard Kelly, Spoken Worship

Made in the image of my Father:
breath-filled,
his will to live kindling my life,
his call to be driving my being.
My heart is sparked by his heart;
my mind is fired by his imagination.
My animation is his declaration:
because he is, I am.

Made in the image of my Father:
able,
artful, articulate,
created to create,
pulsing with potential.
Designed to design, invented for invention,
made to make.
Through his eyes, I see possibilities.
Through his ears, I hear harmonies.
In his heartbeat, I feel life's dancing rhythms.
Because he can,
I will.

Made in the image of my Father:
dependent,
rooted in relationship,
commissioned for companionship,
a free individual made free in community,

distinct yet needing devotion,
complete but needing completion.
Unique, I seek the company of others.
A part, I seek my meaning in the whole.
Because of him, I need to be needed.
Because I am loved, I love.

Made in the image of my Father:
human,
his word of command shaping flesh,
his loving intention sculpting the soil of earth into life.
His voice causing, calling, claiming me,
naming me,
framing my future,
fashioning me.
Because of his dreams, I have promise.
Because of his promise, I have dreams.
Ushered into extravagant existence,
tumbling into time,
fumbling,
falling,
free.
I am human.
I am dependent.
I am able.
I am breath-filled.
I am made in the image of my Father.



Renew the Mind

By Mary Heathman

Continuing in our series on *Right Risk-taking*, this month's article explores another of Bill Treasurer's principles for preparing for right Risk-taking: *Write Your Risk Scripts*. In this principle, the biblical concept of the renewing of our minds is tackled head on. The author targets nine common false beliefs or "limiting scripts" that can pull the rug out from under our forward motion before we even gain traction.

Most people, with a little concentration, can identify common thoughts that come to mind right at the point of attempting to make a change, do a new thing, break an old habit, clean-up messy places in our minds that have gotten out of control. These familiar thoughts have been called by various identifiers (old tapes, false beliefs, shoulds and oughts, etc., etc., etc.) These are all ways we label the crippling mental gyrations that are set in motion whenever we try to rise above the status quo. Treasurer names them, de-

scribes the consequences of leaving them in place, and then suggests writing new "scripts" to adopt in their place.

Principle Three: Write Your Risk Scripts

On the facing page of this chapter, Treasurer quotes Arthur Schopenhauer:

*"There is no absurdity so palpable
but that it may be firmly planted
in the human head
if you only begin to inculcate it
before the age of five,
by constantly repeating it
with an air of great solemnity."*

I offer this scripture on mind formation:

*". . . whatever is true, whatever is noble,
whatever is right, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable
— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—
think about such things."* Phillipians 4:8

Limiting Scripts include those

(Continued on page 6)

(Renew the Mind continued from page 5)

thoughts that are so familiar and sound so “right” that we get caught up in them and the resultant rumination sabotages our forward motion—we get derailed from our focus and goals. Treasurer mentions nine limiting scripts, their consequences and the right risks they inhibit. For our purposes, we will look at one of these limiting scripts, “*I am not enough.*” [As I have said before, Treasurer’s book is worth reading, and the nine limiting scripts are particularly helpful to consider. I recommend if you are intrigued at all that you read this book.]

Before we get into it though, I just want to acknowledge that **the reason these false beliefs are so compelling is that they are rooted in partial truths and often originated in circumstances where they stood us in good stead.** For example, a child who believes he or she is “not enough” in an abusive situation believes not a lie, but the truth—a child does not have the resources, is not enough, to combat the forces that come against her or him. For this child, the formation of this belief is a realization of the reality of the current situation.

But later on, that same child as an adult, has increased strength, a

wide range of choices in kinds of relationships to invest. . . . in other words, has many resources available and no longer has to be victimized. Yet, an entrenched belief that “I am not enough” keeps many an adult from utilizing resources, exercising freedoms and choices, setting boundaries. In describing this phenomena—adults continuing in abusive relationships—the person is said to be practicing their *learned helplessness*. **They are no longer helpless, but the belief that they are keeps them from making different choices.**

“I am not enough.” This limiting script, or false belief, is so common I have chosen it as our example for this article. The consequences of continuing to believe that I am not enough has cost me dearly. Treasurer describes consequences that have wreaked havoc in my own life in time past. (Some days the past doesn’t seem that far past, either.) See if you identify with these consequences of believing that you are not enough (some are described in Treasurer’s own words, others in my own:

- Almost addicted to self-help books and experiences to fight down feelings of inadequacy.
- Constant sense of dissatisfaction

(Continued on page 7)

(Renew the Mind continued from page 6)

tion and discontent.

- Self-berating, perfectionistic.
- Striving to prove myself to. . . who exactly. . .?
- Hyper-ambitious.

All of these consequences rob us from accepting ourselves, keep us from finding peace, and render us unable to accept what the apostle Paul seems to take for granted, “When I am weak, He is strong in me.”

What would it look like if a critical mass of believers could confess our own inadequacy, accept His Adequacy in us, and find ourselves “enough” because we are not alone, but in Him, in His community of believers, and therefore we are enough? Sounds to me like a recipe for powerfully effective ministry.

The rewritten scripts, the “*Write Your Own Script*” that Treasurer writes about includes new beliefs, new thoughts, that we practice until they are internalized. This is the message of Paul in Philippians, quoted previously. As we fill our thoughts with what is true, good, holy, etc., then our minds will be renewed, and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep guard over our hearts. That is good news—our hearts guarded by His peace—we can

quit harking back to the old thoughts, we can adopt new ones, and the way is cleared to move forward.

A new script: Replace the limiting script, “I am not enough,” with a new script. How about “*Nothing is impossible In Him; I am in Him; in Him I am enough!*”

Treasurer, W. (2003). *Right risk: 10 powerful principles for taking giant leaps with your life*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.





January In Review

January 1st: WGA presented at Campus Crusade Event

January 6th: Men's Commitment Group started

January 11th: Survivors of Abuse Group started

January 18th: WGA presented to the staff of Inner City Health Clinic

Thursday Night Group

January 6th: 37 people

January 13th: 42 people

January 20th: 33 people

January 27th: 41 people

Orientation meeting: 3 new people

February And Beyond

February 11-12th: WGA staff/leadership are teaching a conference on "Love Addiction" at The Next Level Church. Contact the WGA office for more information

March 5th: Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 8:00— 9:00 am at the WGA offices

February 12th: WGA event, Game Night!

September 17th: WGA 25th Anniversary Celebration. We hope you will join us to recognize this milestone of WGA history. More information will be coming your way soon!

Financial Update

The 2010 income and expenses are official now. We ended the year showing a profit of \$8,500. Praise God! So far, 2011 has exceeded expectations too, so we are off to a great start. God is faithful! Thank you for your prayers and support.

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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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