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# A Measure of Grace

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## We are Worshipping: God or Something Else?

*by Roger Jones*

*Note: This is an updated version of the original article "Worship the King" which originally appeared in the December 2007 issue of A Measure of Grace.*

Recently via Facebook, I noticed a status update that kept appearing in my newsfeed from a variety of my friends. It read:

"Wonder what would happen if we treated our BIBLE like we treat our CELL PHONE? We CARRY it every where we go. We flipped through it throughout the day. We went home to get it if we FORGOT it. We RECEIVED messages from the text. We COULDN'T live WITHOUT it. We GAVE it to KIDS as gifts. We used it in case of emergency. One more thing, it would NEVER be disconnected. JESUS has already paid the bill."

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*(Worshipping continued from page 1)*

As I read these words, I felt convicted about how I let so many things get in the way of spending time with God. My phone is just one of those distractions. Back in the old days (like 5 years ago), when my cell phone was just a device I used to make calls and occasionally send a text message from, life was simpler. Not too long before that (before cell phones), it was okay to be 2 minutes late to a meeting without making a call about my tardiness.

Now, I can do so many cool things using my phone. Games, email, internet, music, movies, budgeting software, bank accounts, and much more is available to me at my fingertips ALL THE TIME. The quiet “in-between” times that used to be naturally present in my life are difficult to find now. If I

show up early to a meeting, I play Scrabble instead of waiting patiently. Rather than easing into my day with prayer, I check my email before I am even out of bed. My phone is not evil, but I have let it take over some areas of my life.

It isn’t just phones that are the problem for many of us.

After dinner, I often find myself standing in front of the open refrigerator door, peering inside. Am I

hungry? Not for food, I just ate a big dinner a couple of hours ago. But guess what I do? I reach in and pull out something -- ice cream is a favorite. Afterward, lying on the couch and feeling a little disgusted with myself for overeating, I am faced with the reality of my choices. I could have gone to God with my “hunger.” Perhaps the need that I was feeling when I found myself in front of the refrigerator was actually my need for connection with God, not a need to satisfy a food addiction.

***If we are not  
worshipping  
God, then  
what are we  
worshipping?***

I remember a story that a friend of mine once told me. Many years ago, he was both a sex and a drug addict. One day, in the midst of his addiction, God spoke to him, saying, “I wish you would worship me like this.” This was a life changing moment for him. Not only did he feel convicted, but

he realized that God was with him, even in the midst of the darkness he was choosing.

A while ago, my pastor taught a sermon on the topic of worship. During his message, he said, “We were created to worship. We are worshipping something all the time.” He went on to challenge us to try and spend time worshipping God more intentionally throughout our week.

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*(Worshipping continued from page 2)*

If we are not worshipping God, then what are we worshipping? Is it an addiction, or perhaps a relationship that pulls us away from Him? Perhaps it is simply our desire to feel stimulated all the time. Feeling the rush that comes from viewing pornography, or having an orgasm, or merely winning a game of Scrabble is intense in a way that worshipping God is not. This is not because worship is not stimulating or intense; it certainly can be. It is because we can't control God in the way we can control our addictions. We want what we perceive to be "the sure thing," because experience has shown us that our addictions consistently do what they always do... shut down the "hunger." This hunger is our need for God and should not be shut down!

One of the amazing things about God is that He never gives up on us. *He wants me to worship Him with the same passion and fervor that I feel when I worship everything else.* Tonight after dinner, I will have the same choice I always do. When I feel those pangs that I confuse for physical hunger, will I snack or will I turn to God? Will we view pornography or indulge in an unhealthy relationship, or will we answer the call to worship the Creator rather than the created?

Maybe God is calling us to something more in our worship of Him. Whatever our "ice cream" flavor is, I

believe God wants us to go to Him with that deep yearning and hunger and need. He wants us to worship Him with our bodies and through our actions. We can pray, "God, I want \_\_\_\_\_ right now really badly. I feel so empty and alone, and I don't know if these feelings will ever go away. But, I want You more than I want \_\_\_\_\_. Please teach me to be satisfied with what is good and holy. Please help me to wait for You to meet my needs."

When we wait on God, fully aware of the cost and the way we are feeling, we are worshipping Him. We are trusting in His majesty and sovereignty in a way that goes deeper than the words to any praise song or hymn. We are offering ourselves as living sacrifices to the Almighty Creator of the Universe.

*Praise the Lord, O my soul; and all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's (Psalm 103:1-5, NIV).*

## We are Just Friends ~ Really!

By Scott Kingry

I grew up a “Sesame Street” kid. The show first aired in 1969, and I was part of that lucky first generation which got to learn our letters and numbers in a groovy urban setting. We learned from the likes of Big Bird, Cookie Monster and cranky Oscar the Grouch in his trash can. My favorite Muppets on the show were those loveable “Odd Couple” roommates, Ernie and Bert. Ernie liked to sing about his rubber ducky and was always wise-cracking and playing pranks on the uni-browed, stern faced Bert. I have fond memories of dragging a little finger puppet of Ernie around as a kid. He accompanied me on every road trip, straddling the car door lock so that he could look out the window. His little tuft of black hair always fell off and often needed an Elmer’s glue repair. I ran home everyday to watch the show, till one day my mom informed me that I was getting too old and gently suggested that perhaps it was time to tune in to the “Electric Company.”

Those innocent days soon got buried by adulthood. The nature of Ernie and Bert’s friendship came under fire from my friends, who implied that the two Muppets had “more than a friendship”; there were special “sexual” benefits. It seemed the roommates had entered the ranks of famous duos rumored to be gay—Jonathan and David, Ruth and Naomi, along with Sam and Frodo. Last month, Ernie and Bert’s relationship took another strange twist when gay marriage became legal in New York. Chicago resi-



dent, Lair Scott has started a petition on Change.org encouraging the writers of Sesame Street to have the roommates “tie the knot.” The poor puppets are embroiled in what could be a long and tedious debate with opposing comments like:

*Sesame Street is the perfect place to introduce a gay couple to young people as a means of promoting diversity. Just as Sesame Street did in 1970 by introducing an interracial couple, they can take a stand for social justice. Bert and Ernie would be great for this-- A positive gay role model is needed for young people so that they do not grow up believing that GLBT individual-s are "perverted-."*

*I'm all for consenting adults having the right to marry whomever they wish, but come on...these are PUPPETS! Keep your political agendas away from Sesame Street! What's next?—Elmo starts using medical marijuana?*

(Continued on page 5)

(*Just Friends continued from page 4*)

Rather than use the rest of this article on such arguments, I'll refer you to a well balanced, on-line article, "Bert and Ernie: Just 'Ducky' as They Are," by David Kleeman—*President, American Center for Children and Media*.

The underlying question that I continue to ask is "What is happening to same-gender friendship in our culture—is it a vanishing landscape? Why is there an ongoing need to sexualize everything? I've had my own share of Bert and Ernie moments. Early in my missionary career at WGA, a friend within our community graciously invited me to live with him as part of his support for the ministry—together we shared a two-bedroom duplex that we jokingly called the "Maxi-Pad." We did what most roommates did—negotiated the one bathroom every morning, entertained, cleaned, etc. This living situation would last for the next 10 years and was such a gift to me during that season. One day a neighbor casually mentioned that someone on the block had referred to us as the "gay couple that lived on the corner." I suddenly had a major paradigm shift. Things had to reshuffle in my mind. It wasn't particularly insulting or offensive; in fact, I was amused by what people assumed. It just never occurred to me that we were being perceived and defined in a certain way.

I realize that I frequently assume the same things. Two men/women are merely having dinner, or seeing a movie, and my mind will automatically pair them up. Even if they are gay, they're not necessarily together; a male and female doing the same things might not be together sexually or romantically. While traveling in Italy several years ago, I was continuously startled at the genuine warmth the men showed for one another.

In the middle of a tour, I would notice two men engaged in a conversation, sitting close, often touching each other with a comfortable affection. My mind would immediately register this as "gay," and I'd have to take a step back and redefine the observation as something that was simply normal in that country. It truly seemed "foreign" and, I must admit, I was jealous of the freedom. American culture seems to have lost the richness, loyalty and intimate companionship that God intended for same-gender friendships, in large part due to the fear of being labeled homosexual. Another comment on the Muppets' plight bears repeating: *I think it's actively unhelpful to gay and straight men alike to perpetuate the idea that all same-sex roommates, be they puppet or human, must necessarily be a gay couple. Having close, affectionate friendships with another man doesn't mean that you two are sleeping together.*

So will Bert and Ernie be getting hitched any time soon? "It's just not going to happen," says Sesame Workshop President and CEO, Gary Knell, "Even though they are identified as male characters and possess many human traits and characteristics ... they remain puppets and do not have a sexual orientation—they do not exist below the waist."

Thanks for setting the record *straight*.



## God's Provision: Adequate or ...?

*By Mary Heathman*

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In my reading this past week, several times the authors seemed to follow a pattern something like this: 1) Identify and discuss a need or desire that currently isn't being met, 2) explore what God's provision might be for that need or desire, and 3) decide whether God's provision is adequate. From that point, the conversations take different directions depending on whether the author has decided God's provision is adequate or not.

If God's provision is considered adequate, the conversation almost always moves to an exploration of how to manage oneself in light of having not yet experienced God's provision. Questions are considered like: how one might live with unmet needs and desires while waiting on God's provision; how to discover if one is blind to God's provision because it doesn't match one's expectations; or a myriad of other questions that arise out of an honest examination of the incongruity between one's belief that "God's grace is suffi-

cient to meet all our needs," and the stark reality of one's experience of yet unrealized provision. It has been my experience that this direction, though painful, has the result of aligning one more intimately with God and His purposes.

If, on the other hand, God's provision is concluded to be inadequate, the conversation moves quickly to an exploration of how one might "help" God to meet one's needs, or even to turn from God's provision as irrelevant in "this particular need or desire," and pursue other resources that might have something to offer. The outcome of this direction seems to be less painful, at least in the short-term; in fact, it promises fulfillment in a variety of ways, but has been my experience that one's relationship with God suffers. When I turn from God and look elsewhere for provision that is independent of Him, then distance is created and intimacy with God diminishes.

(Author's note: in my writing or speaking, in order to protect confi-

*(Continued on page 7)*

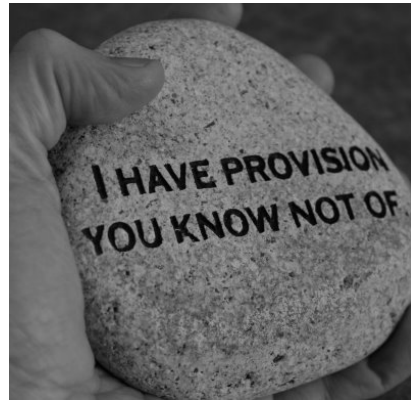
*(Provision continued from page 6)*

dentiality, I never use illustrations or quotes from my private interactions with people; the thoughts and ideas I refer to are always either from reading blogs online, quoting a teacher/speaker/author, or other such public venues.)

It is likely apparent to the reader that I have already revealed my bias—if you didn’t catch it yet, I will spell it out clearly. It is my conviction that “God’s provision is adequate; I just may not recognize, or may not be ready for it yet. He will meet my true needs and holy desires that He has placed within me; but I often don’t even know what they really are and I need for Him to teach me.”

I am not always at this point of faith and commitment to wait for God’s provision, so I am especially grateful for biblical stories that both (1) help me understand that I am not alone in my confusion and impatience with God, and (2) teach me principles to live by as I follow Christ. In the next few months, I will draw from biblical examples of waiting (or not) on the Lord, and how that played out in the lives of biblical characters like Abraham and Sara, Joseph, Saul/Paul, and others. I look forward to revisiting these

stories, as I am currently chafing a bit under the discipline of waiting in some areas of my own life. We’re all in the same boat, you know!





## **August**

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## **In Review**

**August 7th:** Roger spoke in the morning and evening services at Scum of the Earth Church

**Aug b13th:** WGA participated in the AIDS walk in support of HIV Carelink

### **Thursday Night Group**

**August 4th: 25 People**  
**August 11th: 30 People**  
**August 18th: 27 People**  
**August 25th: 24 People**

**Orientation meeting: 2 new people**

## **September**

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## **And Beyond**

**September 17<sup>th</sup>:** WGA 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

**October 1st:** Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 8:00— 9:00 am at the WGA offices

**October 9th:** Cherry Creek Presbyterian Mission Event

**October 14th:** WGA Teaching at “Understanding Broken Sexuality” Conference

**October 16th:** First Denver Friends Mission Event

**October 21-23:** Leadership Retreat—please pray for our leaders!

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*A Measure of Grace*  
is edited by  
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*Where Grace Abounds*  
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