



A Measure of Grace

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What Do you Mean When You Say “Change”?

by Roger Jones

When I showed up on the doorstep of Where Grace Abounds in 1995, I had a pretty good idea of what I was expecting: Change! It had taken me a long time to actually admit that the same-sex attraction I was experiencing was not “just a phase” that would go away with time. Isn’t admitting you have a problem the hardest part of the battle? Seeking out the help I needed meant that the problem was serious, and I was taking it seriously.

Change is a powerful word. We hear it often at church and during political campaigns. “God can change your life!” “Vote for me, and things will change for the better!” Within ministries like WGA, the word

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is often used. Everyone wants some kind of change in their life.

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Change is an inspiring word that brings hope.

And yet, change is a vague and unspecific word too. It is open to the interpretation of each person who is using *or* hearing it. Because of this vagueness, change is often at the focal point of many arguments: Can an addict ever really change and stop being addicted? Can an unfaithful spouse change his/her ways and stay faithful? Can the betrayed spouse change and trust again? Can a person's sexual orientation really be changed?

When people reach out for help for whatever their struggle may be, they have expectations. These are shaped by all the usual culprits: family, friends, goals, religion, etc. As I mentioned earlier, I had a specific idea of what change was when I first came to WGA. I wanted my attractions for men to shift to attractions for women. Homosexual lust was bad and abnormal, heterosexual lust seemed acceptable and normal. Fortunately, my idea of change has evolved somewhat.

Others have very different ideas of what change means for them.

Some, who have no sexual feelings or attractions, define change as what another might call promiscuity. Someone else has been so promiscuous that having no sexual feelings or attractions sounds like heaven. Still others define change as a life of celibacy, which, to them, means freedom from addiction.

The reality is that we have no idea what changes can or will happen.

The goals I had in mind were unrealistic. This is not because they were too big; our God can do anything! More likely, my goals were too small. Could I have accomplished those goals? Maybe. I don't know. I have been around WGA long enough to realize that heterosexual brokenness is no walk in the park, even when com-

pared to my struggles (which always seem worse than everyone else's J). At WGA, I learned about submitting my whole self to God. I don't fully know what His idea of "change" means, but I've finally figured out that healing and restoration do not include trading one form of sin for another.

Two of the biggest challenges we

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And yet, change is a vague and unspecific word too. It is open to the interpretation of each person who is using or hearing it.

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face are to remain open hearted to what God wants to do within us and to remain open handed to the gifts God wants to give us. In our culture, we are so quick to label ourselves and others. And there seem to be rules with the labels too. You can be straight and then become gay, but you can't ever go back to straight or others will think you are living in denial. Bisexual is a label some decide best describes them, but most in our culture seem to think it is just a brief layover from straight to gay.

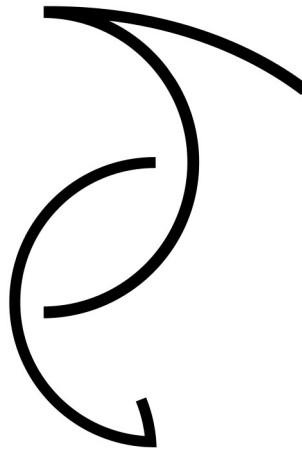
Regardless of the label, by taking them on as our identity, we limit what we allow God to do in our lives. If I decide that living a celibate life is the ultimate healing, am I still open to God bringing a woman and marriage into my life? If I am disappointed that my attractions haven't completely changed, can I still trust God in the midst of temptation? Or will I make decisions based on my definition of what change means?

How do you experience this in your life? What does change mean to you? Does your definition of change hinder the possibility of growth in your life?

There is one thing of which we can be certain: God won't change us to the point that we are no longer dependent upon Him. I cannot have

an ounce of growth, or success or change without Him at the center of my life. He is the giver of life. God isn't asking me to be more heterosexual. He asks me to follow Him and trust that as I do so, He will change me in His time and in His way. He is asking the same of you.

Thank you God for bringing true healing into my life, and refining my definition of change.



ex~pend~able

By Scott Kingry

adj \ik-'spen-de-bel\

- More easily or economically replaced then rescued, salvaged, or protected.

"It's only designed to last 5-7 years," that's the Best Buy salesman responding to some of our questions. My mouth gapes open at his answer; I'm somewhat appalled.

My friend Josh and I are looking for a new flat screen television for him one Saturday morning and we've wandered into the nearest Best Buy to compare prices. He's brought me along to be a sounding board and another pair of eyes and ears for this hefty purchase. I sort of chuckle at the thought; my television is large and black with an old timey "square screen," deeper than it is wide and complete with rabbit ears antennae—very retro as usual. I thought this would be a relatively simple adventure. We'd walk in, pick the best deal and walk out 15 minutes later with a new flat screen. But there are so many features that we need a salesman to sift through all the complexities: brand comparisons, High Definition, Plasma, a/v accessories, warranties etc. He's giving us a long explanation of each product, when we come to the 5-7 year comment.



My mouth is still hanging open. *"Why would anyone spend hundreds of dollars on something that they'll just have to replace in five years?"* I ask, obviously influenced by my thrifty upbringing. His answer is that we don't build or buy for long lasting quality as we were trained to do in past decades. Technology is moving at such a rapid pace that these televisions will be out of date within a few years, and people will automatically want to upgrade when possible. While I nod to the salesman in agreement that "disposable technology" does seem to make sense in this era of almost daily advances, it triggers a different train of thought.

How pervasive is this "expendable" mindset in our culture; what other areas does it infiltrate? I've discussed in past articles that our convenience oriented, consumerist mindset contributes to addictions of all sorts. Of course, working in the WGA arena every day, my mind also drifts to relationship and community. Are our relationships and communities "easily and economically replaced," as the above definition sug-

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gests?

This has at times been true in my life. My motto was, “When the going gets tough—I’m outta here.” Detachment, fear and self-protection came too easily sometimes. Conflict could arise between my friends, or boredom within my group, then as simply as one changes televisions, I’d be off in search of the shinier, bigger, and more improved set of friends. And, though I’ve been rooted and grounded in the community of Where Grace Abounds for the past 25 years, the temptation to treat it as “disposable” still rears its ugly head occasionally.

Jesus’ prayer for us in John 17 has really convicted me over the past month (Mary used this in her Valentine’s Reflection article in February). *“I have given them the glory that You gave me, that they may be one as We are one: I in them and You in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me”* John 17:22-23.

Apparently the Lord places a high value on our unity as His body, and I imagine this trickles down to each of our personal communities and individual relationships. The way we treat one another makes the reality of our Invisible God visible to the world. This is a substantial responsibility. I’ve experienced many relationships throughout my life that have naturally changed, been out-

grown or faded over the years, but I’m feeling the weight of the Lord’s many “one another” admonitions: love one another, forgive one another, bear with one another, etc. Even as I type this, I can think of several relationships that have become dispensable and left with a loose end because I’ve been too scared, worn out or lazy to press in. God has shown that He will “rescue,” “salvage” and go to any length (even His own life) to “protect” our closeness to Him and each other. I can’t imagine He wouldn’t want me to put on my grown up pants and follow suit. So...Lent seems like a good season to examine and confess these relational sins. Most times I’m overwhelmed by the very thought and am painfully aware I can’t tackle them without Him.

Meanwhile, we’re back at his apartment and Josh is just finishing setting up his High Def, flat screen in all its shiny new glory (even with surround sound!) and is trying out his new purchase with an episode of “The Big Bang Theory.” The picture is crystal clear and I have to admit, *“Not bad for something made to last 5 or so years.”*

God's Provision~Joseph

By Mary Heathman

For the whole story, read Genesis, chapters 30-42.

Joseph was the first-born of Rachel, the wife Jacob loved the most. **He was the favorite son of the favorite wife.** Jacob lavished attention and gifts on Joseph, one in particular really set him apart from his brothers—a beautiful and ornate, “coat of many colors.”

When Joseph was 17, he was tending the sheep with his brothers and he brought back a bad report to his father about his brothers. [Note: When I did such a thing, my brothers and sisters called me a tattletale—is that still the term?] Joseph also had a dream that clearly predicted that his brothers would bow down to him. **His brothers hated him** all the more.

One day when the brothers were out tending the flocks, Jacob sent Joseph out to see how the brothers were doing. When he tracked them down finally and they saw him coming wearing his beautiful coat, they were furious. They stripped him of his robe; and they intended to kill him, but Reuben talked them out of it. **Joseph was sold** instead into slavery to the Ishmaelites, who sold him to Potiphar, the head of the Pharaoh's guard.

And the narrator of the story says, **“The Lord was with Joseph.”**

So Joseph worked hard, was diligent and faithful in his service to Potiphar

and was placed in a key position of responsibility. He became Potiphar's attendant and was “entrusted with all the household matters.”

But then, Potiphar's wife was attracted to Joseph and came on to him, attempted to seduce him, but he refused. This went on and on. She kept after him in spite of his refusals. Once Joseph even ran out of the house while she still clung to his robe. She accused him of sexual assault, using the robe as proof and Potiphar had Joseph thrown into prison. **Joseph was imprisoned as a sex offender—falsely accused**, but none the less doing time for a sexual crime.

And, yet, **“the Lord was with Joseph.”** He became a highly trusted prisoner. The chief prison guard put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and all that was done there in the prison.

The saga goes on telling the story of Joseph and dream interpretations. The king's baker and the cup-bearer were thrown into prison for displeasing the king. They both had dreams and Joseph interpreted them for them. When the interpretation proved accurate, and the cup-bearer went back to his job in the service of the king, Joseph asked him to remember him when he had the ear of the king. But the **cup-bearer forgot all about Joseph** for two years.

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And **“the Lord was with Joseph”**

In the next chapter we find the king troubled by a recurring dream that no one could interpret. It was then, two years later, that the cupbearer remembered Joseph, and he was brought before the king. Joseph told the king that he couldn’t interpret his dream, but that God could. When Joseph gave the interpretation, the king was so impressed that he put him in charge of the whole nation. “I am Pharaoh, but without your (Joseph’s) word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.”

The Lord was with Joseph still.

He proved to be a gifted administrator and stored up seven years of grain surplus to cover the coming fast that the dream had predicted. Egypt was the only place that had food during the famine, and together with all the surrounding cities, his brothers came to buy food—from Joseph, but they didn’t know it was him.

As the story wraps up, we find the brothers reconciled, **ultimately Joseph forgave his brothers, saying, “You meant it for evil, but God intended it for good.”** And **Joseph (after all that he went through) was the agent through which God’s provision was available to sustain Jacob’s family through the drought.**

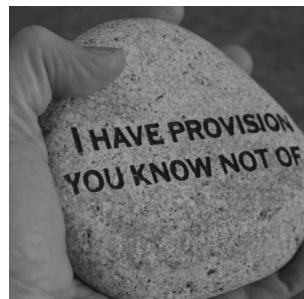
The story speaks for itself; it is for us to think about how it applies. Joseph was abused by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, forgotten by people he helped; spent a significant chunk of his adult life in a foreign land. I can’t help but wonder if he

ever just cried out to God, “Lord, if you are with me, then where is your provision? Provision for deliverance from slavery, for one thing. And yet, “the Lord was with Joseph.” It makes me think that God Himself must *be* the provision while we wait on what we hope for and expect, not seeing the bigger picture.

Can it be that there is a decades-long plan that God is working out that will make my daily grievances seem miniscule once I get there—once I see what it has all been about? Won’t I fall on my face in worship at the magnitude of it all, and the privilege of being a part of His wondrous provision?

Is God’s provision adequate? Yes, ultimately! In the meantime, can I immerse my mind and heart in reading about His provision for the Israelites, for the believers who have gone before, for the saints who testify to His goodness? Can I trust in that witness while I wait? I think I can. Will I? I think I will, ultimately, with God’s help!

Praise be to the Lord, Jehovah-Jireh, our Provider!





February In Review

February 28-29th: WGA presented a seminar in Casper Wyoming

Thursday Night Group

February 2nd: 26 people

February 9th: 33 people

February 16th: 33 people

February 23rd: 27 people

Orientation meeting: 4 new people

March And Beyond

March 30th: WGA presenting at Denver Street School

April 7th: Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 8:00—9:00 AM at the WGA office

April 19th: Orientation Meeting

May 5th: Family and Friends Gathering. Stay tuned for more info!

May 26th: WGA Picnic - come join us to celebrate 26 years of ministry, plus we will be honoring Scott Kingry for his 20 year of service. More info soon!

Financial Update

January—February Income	\$28,781.21
January—February Expense	\$39,420.90
January—February Loss	\$10,639.69

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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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