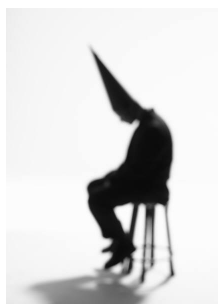




August 2012  
Volume 16, Issue 8

# A Measure of Grace

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds



## The Effects of Shame *by Roger Jones*

A few months ago as I was wandering through a bookstore, I came across the self-help section. I occasionally like to peruse this section to see if there are any new books by authors I've read before. One book caught my attention, *Shame & Guilt: Masters of Disguise*, by Jane Middleton-Moz (Health Communications, Inc., 1990). I picked up the book and flipped through the pages. I could relate with many of the examples inside, so I bought the book.

People often mistake guilt for shame and vice versa. For clarification, it is important to remember that guilt is how I feel when I've done something wrong, a fear of punishment or consequences. With shame, we feel that our "self" is being judged, which brings a fear of isolation and abandonment. Guilt says, "I did something bad." Shame says, "I am bad."

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We have all experienced shame at some point in our lives and to varying degrees. Some were made to feel useless or always in the way. Parents, unhappy with how they were raised, may attempt to create a perfect environment for their children. This atmosphere of perfection doesn't allow for mistakes or anything less than excellence. Mistakes made by children become more than just opportunities for correction. The shame they are made to feel because of their mistakes or for not being perfect is internalized.

The message of shame comes from other places too. Peers tease the kid in school who isn't good at sports. Some respond by pressing into this and learning to excel, while others internalize the shame and never try a sport again. Sexual abuse causes men and women to feel a deep sense of shame as well, thinking things like, "I did something to cause this to happen," or "It felt good when he touched me, so there must be something wrong with me."

Those for whom shame was a constant presence while growing up, the effects carry forward into adulthood. In the book *Shame & Guilt*, the author lists twenty one ways that adults who experienced shame in childhood are impacted. Here are a few of those:

Adults shamed as children:

- Are afraid of vulnerability and

fear exposure of self.

- May suffer extreme shyness, embarrassment, and feelings of being inferior to others.
- Fear intimacy and tend to avoid real commitment in relationships.
- May appear either grandiose and self-centered or appear selfless.
- Frequently feel defensive when even minor negative feedback is given.
- Apologize constantly. They assume responsibility for the behavior of those around them.
- Project their beliefs about self onto others. They engage in mind reading that is not in their favor.
- Often feel controlled from the outside and the inside. Normal spontaneous expression is blocked. One common thought is, "I'm making a fool of myself."
- Feel they must do things perfectly or not at all. This frequently leads to performance anxiety and procrastination.
- Block their feelings of shame through compulsive behaviors like workaholism, eating disorders, shopping, substance abuse, list making, or gambling.
- Have caseloads rather than friendships.
- Are stuck in dependency or counter-dependency.

After reading the entire book, I believe I have a pretty good understanding of shame and how it differs from

(Continued on page 6)



## How are We Doing, Really? *by Mary Heathman*

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One of the classes taught in WGA's Foundations series is **Identity in Christ**. In this class the group member is introduced to (or reminded of) a basic truth of Christianity: *our identity is to be rooted in Christ*. It is my firm conviction that if we really loved God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength, that our hearts and minds would come into conformity with His, and that the way we perceive ourselves and others would be transformed into oneness with Christ's.

We know that God's purpose regarding us is to form us into the likeness of Christ.<sup>1</sup> We also know that He who began this work within us will bring it to completion.<sup>2</sup> It has seemed to me, then, that as we grow into His likeness, as we become more like Him, then increasingly we will see what He sees, hear what He hears, feel what He feels, and do what He is doing in the world.

A passe' cultural fad - wearing necklaces and wrist bands with the letters **WWJD**-reminds us to think before we act, asking ourselves in any given situation, "**What Would Jesus Do?**" Years ago, Charles Sheldon, in his book, **In His Steps**, told a powerful story of a town that took this thought seriously, and purposed to walk as Jesus walked. The results were dramatic; the whole town was transformed!

A few years ago I taught a

workshop in a conference where some of the participants wore bands with the letters **AHDYKWJWDIYDKWHD**. One of the wearers of this cryptic message explained it to me, "**How Do You Know What Jesus Would Do If You Don't Know What He Did?**" Men and women all over the conference were quick to declare that it is in reading the record of Jesus' life (Bible Study) that we discover what He did, before we can even begin to know what He might do today. They were concerned that the **WWJD** folks might, in their zeal, get the cart before the horse, so to speak!

The friendly competition between the two messages served to broaden the minds and hearts of those who stopped for a moment to think about the ramifications of living as Jesus did, and how we might know what He might do today. I was blessed by the passion and zeal of the message-wearers!

I readily endorse the importance of Bible study and running every decision through the WWJD grid. However, my focus is a little different these days. My passion and zeal are currently focused on the *outcomes*, or *lack thereof*, of a life lived in this way. I am asking myself if what I have believed for so long is happening in me and in my brothers and sisters in Christ. I am asking whether loving God, as we say we do, is really resulting in doing what He does.

"Since I believe I am in Christ," I challenge myself, "then it should show."

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

*By Nancy Hicks*

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Daddy, up?

*Hear my cry for mercy  
as I call to you for help,  
as I lift up my hands  
toward your Most Holy Place. (Ps 28:2)*



My legs are tired and I feel small today.  
The walking seems to go on forever and I want to rest.  
I want to bury my face in your neck, tuck my arms in front of me, lean into you, and  
feel the rhythm of your steps.  
I want to be lulled into contentment as you carry me in your strong arms today.

*I long to dwell in your tent forever  
and take refuge in the shelter of your wings. (Ps 61:4)*

Please don't tell me that I'm too old or too big.

*Even to your old age and gray hairs  
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.  
I have made you and I will carry you;  
I will sustain you and I will rescue you. (Is 46:4)*

Please look down on me with a kind face and delight and scoop me up for this  
stretch of the journey today.  
It would be great if you would hum while we walked. I love to have my ear pressed  
against your chest and feel the vibration of your music as much as I hear it.

*The LORD your God is in your midst—a warrior bringing victory.  
He will create calm with his love;  
he will rejoice over you with singing. (Zeph 3:17)*

I don't know what you smell like, but I'm sure it will remind me of pine trees and  
fresh water and warm sand and wind.  
Hold me until I fall asleep.

Up, Daddy?

*Save your people and bless your inheritance;  
be their shepherd and carry them forever. (Ps 28:9)*

(How are We Doing *continued from page 3*)

Does my life show evidence that Christ is living in me?" "And what about the Church," I wonder, "is there evidence that we are the eyes and ears and hands of the Living Christ in the world He died to save?"

For several reasons, this is the time of year for me to do this kind of introspection. It was in the summer of 1985, I received my call to ministry. Every year during the summer, I take time to ask the Lord what his game plan is for the coming year for me.

This month is also the time that the WGA staff is gearing up for the new fall schedule after a summer break of sorts. In our staff meetings and the upcoming leadership meeting, we are taking the time to think through the past year, pray and dream about the future, and discuss together how it seems the Lord is leading us individually and corporately. At the annual leadership retreat in October, we will think and discuss further and pray together for the Lord's wisdom and guidance in our hearts and minds. We need this wisdom and guidance both as men and women in relationship with Him, and as the WGA leadership team yoked together for His purposes.

My church also is in a season of regrouping and planning for the future. We have a new lead pastor, and our annual denominational meeting is this weekend. In October, at our annual missions conference, people will consider their commitments to missionaries and pray

what the Lord will have them do to support them in 2013. We are also considering a leadership retreat where we will decide together what strategies in the coming year will most help us focus and develop goals and objectives as a church.

So, there are plenty of good, solid reasons I am examining my performance and that of my co-laborers in Christ. But there is one other reason that I haven't yet mentioned, for it is painful to think about: ***I am asking some hard questions, for myself and the Church, and am currently in a state of grief over***

***the answer as I see it.*** It seems to me that, though I could point to many accomplishments, when I compare my life to the life of Christ, I am failing miserably. And when I look about me at the Church's representation of Christ in our world, my grief only broadens.

"My grief is a good thing," I tell myself, and anyone else who will listen. "It shows that I am not complacent, and is evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in me (or I wouldn't even care at all.) It shows that I want so much for my life to be a witness to God's love and peace, His grace and truth, His light in the darkness." But these attempts at coming to a sober estimate of myself are not yet enough, for I remain profoundly disappointed.

I am reminded of a song that has been popular at mission's conferences. I can't remember the title, but one of the lines is branded on my soul: "I am tired of being stirred and not being changed."

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***I wonder, "Is there evidence that we are the eyes and ears and hands of the Living Christ in the world He died to save?"***

(Shame continued from page 2)

guilt. The book was 108 pages long, of which the first 101 pages described the development of guilt and shame in a person and how these problems surface as adults. The few remaining pages at the end contained all that the author offered to help with the problem. This left me feeling a bit lost as to what to do with all the things stirred up within me by the text. "How do I fix the problem?" I was asking. "Where are my 10 easy steps to freedom?"

After giving this some thought, I realized that perhaps the solution really is simple. This does not mean that it is easy, however. The author pointed out that along with shame comes a feeling of aloneness. We feel like no one will understand what we are feeling. "If I tell someone how I feel, I will be rejected and abandoned." Based upon

past experiences, these fears may be justified. The truth is that while someone may have abandoned you in the past, not everyone will. Finding a safe place to share these feelings is imperative to moving on from them.

Does healing mean the absence of shame in our lives? Probably not. When we have years of reacting emotionally to the circumstances we find ourselves in, it takes time to recover.

We may not be able to choose how we feel in the moment, but we do have power in how we respond. When we feel ashamed and shaken to the very core with "I am bad" thoughts, we can stop ourselves from living there. We can pray for God to pierce our hearts with the truth of who he made us to be. We can call a safe friend or share the feelings in a small group, confessing our negative beliefs about ourselves. Creating new habits in how we respond to shame greatly decreases its effects in our lives.

***Finding  
a safe place  
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These aren't magical solutions. They simply take the power out of shame, which is based in lies we believe about ourselves. Asking God to reveal truth to us and getting a reality check from a trusted friend brings clarity in a way that harboring secret thoughts cannot. People who truly know and love us will be able to

reflect back a more accurate representation of who we truly are.

*"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:1-2, NIV)*

*Note: This article first appeared in May 2008: Volume 12, Issue 5*

(How are We Doing *continued from page 5*)

I am tired too. I want to be changed to the point that, as Wayne Watson sang, "One day Jesus, will call my name/ until that day, I hope I don't stay the same/ I want to get so close to Him that it's no big change/ on that day when Jesus calls my name."

Experience tells me that I will come through this dark season with hope, renewed vision, energy and enthusiasm to tackle the tasks the Lord brings before me. I know that after a season of comparing ourselves to Christ, facing honestly how far short of the standard we fall, grieving, confessing, and praying for His forgiveness and cleansing, my brothers and sisters in Christ and I will march on, allowing God to live in and through us in the coming year.

But for now, I am still asking some very tough, uncomfortably specific, questions: If the Lord will set the lonely in families, then whose families if not ours? If the Lord will feed the hungry through His people, then why are so many in the world still hungry? If the Lord gave up His life, and we are to do the same, then why do we withhold so much of our lives? If Jesus says, "Be ye holy, even as I am holy", then why do we allow the slightest unholiness to rest in our minds and hearts? If the measure of knowing Christ is obeying His commands, then why do we resist doing so?

These questions, and many others like them, are based on biblical promises or commands. And they send me to my knees in despair. It seems to me that compared with our capacity to do so, we rarely move past our comfort-zones in any consistent way to meet the needs represented by these questions, and I am embarrassed and ashamed for us all.

A friend of mine chastises me

when I get too depressed over such questions. She says, But where is the joy of your salvation? Is there no cause for celebration in what God has done in you so far? What about all the Church is doing in the world? How little you talk of God's grace when you get like this!

And she is right. I must, like the apostle Paul, gather myself, together with the saints, into His presence and cry out to Him: The bad that we don't want to do, we do anyway; the good that we want to do, we don't do; who will rescue us from this body of death? Thanks be to God! There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus<sup>1</sup>. "His grace is sufficient for us." "Through the blood of the lamb, and the word of our testimony, we shall overcome!"<sup>4</sup>

AMEN! ? ! ? ! ? ! ? ! ? ! ? ! ? ! ?

And in the meantime, will you pray with me that God will change us, so that we will every day, every year that goes by become more like Him?<sup>5</sup> And pray that He will give us the strength to live a life of repentance and walk simply in His grace? Thank you for your prayers.

<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, .

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 1:6 . . . . he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:1 . . there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 12:11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb

<sup>5</sup> 1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

*Note: This article first appeared in September 2001: Volume 5, Issue 9*



## July At a Glance

**July 7th: WGA night at the Park**

**July 12th: WGA movie night "The Way"**

**July 27th: WGA and the Olympics—we gathered to watch the opening ceremonies**



## August And Beyond

**June - August: We have a modified schedule for our Thursday night group over the summer. Call ahead for more info**

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

**September 20th: Orientation Meeting - this is a great introduction to the ministry and a requirement to participate in WGA's groups**

## Financial Update

**Thank you so much for praying for WGA's finances. God has been faithful to provide! We have made up our deficit and have a little extra to move forward with. Thanks again for your gifts and prayers.**

### WGA Staff

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*A Measure of Grace*  
is edited by  
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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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