



# A Measure of *Grace*

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## Welcome Julia Rose Jones

*by her daddy, Roger Jones*

**O**n May 2nd, my wife Jill and I welcomed our baby girl into the world. We named her Julia Rose Jones: Julia, after my mother (who goes by Judy), who has wanted a grand baby for a long time; Rose, after WGA's very own Mary Rose Heathman. Mary has been a good friend, counselor, and mentor to both Jill and me. We hope that our little Julia Rose will take on some of the wonderful qualities of these two important women in our lives.

Julia Rose arrived a few weeks earlier than we expected. She was due on May 27th. We got to meet her about 3 weeks early. For a couple of weeks prior to her delivery, Jill had been experiencing high blood pressure and had some other symptoms that led our doctor to believe Jill might have preeclampsia. Preeclampsia is an

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illness that affects the mother initially, and if she sickens, the baby can also suffer eventually. It affects kidney and liver function as well as blood pressure.

The doctor had Jill go into the hospital on May 1st for a 24 hour observation. His suspicions were confirmed; Jill did, in fact, have preeclampsia, even though she felt fine. Since she was over 36 weeks along in her pregnancy, the best course of action was to deliver the baby. He told us, "Delivery is the only cure for preeclampsia."

At about 12:30 p.m. on May 2nd, Jill was wheeled into the operating room for a C-section. Julia Rose had been in the breech position for the majority of the pregnancy, otherwise they would have induced labor for a natural birth. I won't lie, it was a bit scary. The last time I was in an O.R. was when I was 3 years old and had my tonsils removed. Jill was afraid as well. We just looked into each other's eyes



and talked about the baby we were about to meet while the 10 or so people in the room did their various jobs around us. They became a bit of a blur in the background.

We were not prepared for a C-section. Jill and I are both "information collectors," and we thought we had more time than we did. I briefly read before the surgery that typically, the baby is delivered within the first few minutes of the procedure, the stitching up and clean up takes about an hour. I'm not sure how many minutes it was until we heard the baby's cry for the first time, but it seemed like ages.

As the doctor prepared to withdraw Julia Rose from Jill's womb, he asked if I would like to see her be taken out. I declined. I really did not want to see Jill's body in that condition, nor did I want to cut the umbilical cord. Then she was out and we heard her cry. The doctor showed her to us right away and we were immediately in love.

Jill got to hold her for a few moments before Julia Rose was taken to be cleaned up a bit and the Doctor could begin to repair the incision he had made in Jill's abdomen. I went with the nurses who were taking care of our precious little newborn and checking her over. She was in great health, weighing 5

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## What Are We Living For *by Mary Heathman*

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Life and ministry have been a bit overwhelming the past few months. Family celebrations and crises, ministry values challenged and affirmed (sometimes in the same conversations), personal health hassles. . . . I could go on and on. . . .

Overwhelm is defined as “*buried or drowning beneath a huge mass; defeated completely.*” So, I guess when I say “*a bit overwhelming,*” I am taking the stresses of today and adding a measure of possible negative outcome to the mix. Of course, **I am not actually buried, nor completely defeated.** Nonetheless, the feelings associated with the stressors take their toll if I don’t address them.

For me, the most effective way to deal with overwhelm is to take a step back and look at all that I am doing and set priorities. I ask the question, “What is really mine to do and how can I refocus to make sure that most of my time and attention are spent on that priority—the one God has placed in front of me today?”

It is a simple plan, and it usually works well. But sometimes, it just isn’t that clear to me. Conflicting urgencies vie for my attention and I have to work a little harder, dig a little deeper, to see what is going on. A few

other questions rise during these seasons: “*Where is Life? What’s the main point of what I am doing? What am I living for?*”

When I ask myself these questions and spend some time thinking about the answers, I find myself making progress. Sometimes I don’t like what I find, for example, when the core of the problem is that I have organized my life around something other than God, when Jesus isn’t the hub of my attention, but has become peripheral. In Christian circles, this is known as idolatry, life revolving around anything other than God. Such a realization is always a wake-up call for me; certainly I must attend to it now, no procrastination is allowed on this point. It just costs too much!

It is almost irrelevant what the central thing has become, because whatever it is, it must be unseated. But for my purposes in this article, I don’t mind sharing. I have discovered that my life has been revolving around my ability to resolve conflict. There are a couple of relationships that have been difficult, and my mind has worked overtime trying to brainstorm fixes for the problems (for my part and for theirs—as if I could do their part of the relationship!). I have gone to bed thinking about various scenarios in which I could explain myself well

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## With Fresh Eyes

By Scott Kingry

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*Let us not become weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6: 9 & 10*

What's it like attending a support group every week for twenty something years? Well, when I first came to Where Grace Abounds in 1987, it was quite an eye opening experience. For me it felt like two separate worlds were getting bridged together. At that time, I was very active in the gay community, had a boyfriend and unexpectedly had experienced a recent conversion back to my Christian faith. My friends were not very excited with my new love for Jesus and even less thrilled that I began questioning all sorts of facets of life, including my sexuality. It was like being shoved into the closet all over again, but for different reasons. Still, attending a church didn't seem particularly safe to me having been back with the Lord for only a few brief months. I wasn't sure what folks there might think about homosexuality, and I certainly wasn't going to risk finding out. Back then, sitting in those small groups in a church basement on Thursday nights, everything somehow came together. I could talk about how important God was to me while I wrestled with trying to figure out His heart about my sexuality.



Finally, I had a place where everyone seemed to understand.

For the next several years, while sifting through a lot of painful past wounds and current consequences, small group became even more important. It was a pretty raw season, so to be supported while sharing waves of grief, sorrow, confusion and even bits of healing brought relief. I was grateful to have an environment that was safe enough to let everything just hang out. As with most seasons of life, the turbulent waves of emotion eventually ebbed, and what felt raw, became manageable and even routine. Over the next couple of decades I'd move in and out of these small group seasons: times of sheer brokenness and overwhelm, then taking things for granted and flying on autopilot.

This Thursday, unfortunately, feels like an autopilot sort of evening. We've just heard our speaker and I've done the traditional counting off of people and pointed out rooms where each number will meet. We're splitting into separate men's and women's groups, so I'm making my way through a number of hurried conversations as we all scurry to

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our rooms for the evening. As someone who's facilitated these small groups for a couple of decades now, I begin with my usual initial assessments as I enter the room and take my chair among the guys. How much time do we have? How many men are in my group? What's the mixture of temperaments and personalities? What in the world am I going to share? How's my week been?

All this is going on in my pointed head, as we begin with a few minutes of discussion about the talk we've just heard before moving into a more focused time of sharing. Most of the guys have check-ins, and a couple of them need more time. We're moving around the group, I'm doing my best to listen and be present to each of the men as they share, give some appropriate feedback, and let others offer their thoughts. Things seem to be going relatively well until....

And this I just hate to admit. I get to someone whom I think I "know" all about. Has that ever happened to you? He's shared a problem, similar to ones that have been constant for many years now. It has all the familiar story lines, all the usual characters and outcomes. Sad to say, I'm tuning out again and I know how this will go: we'll all listen on autopilot for the customary 5 or so minutes without much feedback; I'll smoothly transition to the next guy, wrap us up in prayer and then it's off to Village Inn for coffee and eggs.

But wait, some unsuspecting new person is breaking the robotic spell and actually asking a question. What ensues

over the next several minutes is a fairly "breakthrough" conversation. The simple question immediately takes us to a deeper level with the group member whom I thought I knew. Rather than a repetitive monologue, I'm hearing things I've never heard before: underlying emotions like shame and abuse, past wounds that explain why this issue has become a driving factor in this man's life, and rejection and betrayal from important people somehow make all the puzzle pieces come together. I am truly getting to know this man a bit. Yet, he's not the one having the major breakthrough from this discussion; it's all going on internally within me. My heart has been leveled over the last 5 or so minutes.

We've prayed and I'm leaving most assuredly humbled by this short but sweet interaction. One attentive and unassuming question revealed in the last few minutes what I've chosen to simply ignore for a while now. Suddenly a **person** has appeared before my eyes, not a problem to facilitate or a sharing time to conveniently get through with the least amount of effort. An actual human whom God loves is battling obstacles to seek wholeness in his life no matter how the actual journey has looked over the years. This is graciously happening within the community of Where Grace Abounds. I'm doing some repentant confession on my way to Village Inn. Is it complaisance, frustration, or just plain weariness that caused me to miss God at work? I'm not sure, maybe all three. But I'm so grateful the Lord has reminded me; hopefully, I will have fresh eyes to see those in my small groups in the future.

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pounds 7.4 ounces and 17 inches long.

The next 24 hours were difficult for Jill. Due to the high blood pressure issue and the anesthesia she had been under, she was restricted to her bed while she received magnesium sulfate, which prevents seizures. She was unable to eat anything during this time and was only allowed a few ice chips after about 6 hours. While she was in bed, I was able to bond with Julia Rose through quite a few diaper changes. Jill and baby began the process of learning how to breast feed. Our breast feeding class was scheduled for May 11th, 9 days too late!

Finally after that long, difficult day, we were moved to a room where we would stay for the next 3 nights. The doctors and nurses were all so kind and helpful. Jill and I were surprised by how much we did not know about caring for a newborn, even after multiple classes leading up to Julia Rose's arrival. We were also surprised by how the nurses were so eager to help and share their knowledge. They are a group of women who love to do what they do! We thanked Mary, the nurse we spent the most time with, and told her that we felt like we had been loved well and mothered by her during our stay. All three of us teared up a bit!

And now we are home with our little baby. Did I mention that Jill and I are buying a house? We planned to move before the baby came, but that did not happen. Our little one bedroom condo is just not big enough for the three of us. We had begun to pack before we went to the hospital. Our home was a disaster! Thankfully some good friends of ours helped us to get a few things settled before we came home. Jill's mom came to help out and is still with us as I write this. Four people in our one bedroom condo is a confirmation that it is time to move.

Leading up to the arrival of our little baby, I was feeling discouraged and more than a little afraid. In addition to the fears I think are universal to most parents-to-be, I was reminded of my own past and struggles with sexuality. To add to the fears, I had recently learned that two long-time, national leaders (one current and one former) with similar stories to mine were now recanting their testimonies. They even went so far as to say that the change they had previously declared had not really occurred at all.

At the beginning of these two men's marriages, I don't imagine they thought they would be where they are today. When their children were being born, I am sure they didn't either. I don't fully un-

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understand their reasoning or really know much about their lives at all, short of the sound-bites that have worked their way to me. I do know, though, that their choices have affected me. I know that I am free to make my own choices. I pray that I will make ones that are honoring to the commitments I have made to God, my wife, and now, my daughter.

As I hold my wife and look into the wide eyes of my precious Julia Rose, it is difficult to imagine not wanting to be with the two of them for the rest of my life. I am doing

my best to embrace who I understand God has made me to be. At times like this, I am aware that I am living a life that I do not deserve. It is only through Christ and his promises that I am able to be in this place. My heart is bursting with more love than I realized a person was capable of feeling.



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enough to be vindicated. I wake up in the morning with even more creative thoughts along the same lines. At odd times during the day, feelings of frustration arise and I find my thoughts yet again caught up in virtual conflict resolution.

There is nothing inherently wrong with trying to fix a problem in a relationship; in fact, Scripture is full of admonitions to reconcile with one another. The problem isn't that I want to reconcile. It is that the resolution of these particular situations has become more of a priority than the other things the Lord has on my plate. Indeed, it has become even more important than my prayer time with Him which has been preempted too often by my in-

sistence that God fix the conflict.

So, I give up fixing it. I confess that I put something else in Jesus' place, confess my idolatry and then look eagerly to see God's provision for me now that He is back at the center.

Some will say this strategy is simplistic, but it is the only one that brings peace to me, so I offer it to you. Find and pull out anything in your life that has taken center stage, the place in your life that belongs only to God. Dig deeper; find the root; confess it; receive the forgiveness that is already yours through Christ; and enjoy the peace as you look eagerly forward to see what God will do!



## April In Review

**April 6th: Family & Friends Gathering**

**April 7th: WGA presented to the youth at Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church**

**April 12th: Monthly Family & Friends of Sex Offenders meeting**

## May And Beyond

**May 25th: Memorial Weekend Picnic—call the office for more information!**

**June 1st: Intercessory Prayer meeting, 8:00 am at the WGA offices. Come join us as we pray for the needs of the ministry**

**June 20th: Monthly Orientation Meeting required for participation in WGA's Thursday Night Group—invite a friend!**

**June 30th: WGA will be presenting at Denver Area Youth for Christ**

## Prayer Requests

**Please pray for WGA's finances**

**Please pray for our staff this summer as they each take a month sabbatical: Roger in June, Scott in July and Mary in August**

### Thursday Night Group

**April 4th: 31 people**

**April 11th: 25 people**

**April 18th: 34 people**

**April 25th: 32 people**

**Orientation meeting: 4 new people**

### WGA Staff

**Roger Jones**  
Executive Director

**Scott Kingry**  
Program Director

**Mary Heathman**  
Founding Director

**Steve Huston**  
Chaplain/Church Liaison

**Jill Huston**  
Family & Friends Coordinator

*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.*

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