



# A Measure of *Grace*

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## Ministry Updates

*by Roger Jones*

**S**would like to say, “Thank you,” to everyone who reads A Measure of Grace. We often get comments and feedback from our readers, and those are always appreciated. Feel free to drop us a line to let us know your thoughts. It is an encouragement to hear that people are reading and that your thoughts are being challenged.

This month, I wanted to give you a few updates about some things happening around WGA. We would appreciate your prayers about these!

We currently have four groups running:

- WGA’s regular Thursday Night Group, which has around 35 men and women participating in it each week. This is a drop-in group for people dealing with any issue with regards to sexuality and relationship.
- Going Deeper with God is a group focused on people’s relationship with God and will run through November.

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- The Renew Group, focused on addictions, has 8 participants and meets through November.
- Once a month, WGA's newest group meets on a Friday night. It is for family and friends of a person convicted of a sex offense. When a person commits a sex offense and is arrested, there is little support for the family members who are affected. If you know of anyone in this situation, please have them call or email the office for more information about this group.

**Speaking Engagements:**

- WGA recently offered training for a local, Denver-based ministry which provides housing and discipleship for men and women in transition, often due to addiction or abusive home situations. Please pray that the information we shared will be helpful and that the leaders will be able to utilize the information with the individuals with whom they work.
- On October 31st-November 2nd, Mary will be traveling to North Carolina where she will be a presenter at the Hope for Wholeness Conference.
- On November 7-8, we will be presenting a couple of topics to a group of seniors at Front Range Christian School. The goal is to help this group of students to better understand how

to approach people who are facing issues they may not understand with compassion and the love of Christ.

**Financial Update:**

- Thus far in 2013, the monthly cost of operations has exceeded income. Fortunately, there were some extra funds received at the end of 2012 which have covered this shortage. Would you pray with us about God's continued provision for WGA and consider making a donation?

Thank you so much for your prayers and your support of Where Grace Abounds. Please let us know how we can be praying for you!





## The Five “C’s” of Sabotage

*By Mary Heathman*

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In this series of articles, I will write about 1) our part in aligning ourselves with His purposes, 2) how we stay aligned against the pull of the enemy and our own propensity to wander away, and 3) I want to write a bit about the Hope of Glory that makes all that perseverance worth the effort.

As I approach this topic, though, I realize that all of what I want to write about is based on the assumption that the way is clear before us. Yet, from my own experience and that of so many people who have shared their stories with me, the path before us is often strewn with obstacles that can sabotage our efforts to get closer to God. So, this month, I will talk about five ways in which we can sabotage ourselves before we get started. I presented these thoughts at a Where Grace Abounds group meeting several years ago and am amazed at how relevant the caution is for me today!

Following are five attitudes that sabotage our efforts to go deeper, to walk closer with God. Following are antidotes, so to speak; five ways to fight self-sabotage.

Carelessness is when we don’t pay attention; when we are not “Mindful” as Positive Psychology folks call it. It is when we take less care than it takes to keep up our momentum. Remember the

Second Law of Thermodynamics – “everything in the universe is moving toward chaos?” Well, recent science questions the “everything” about this statement, but we know that without careful attention, concentrating on pursuing God (Holy Obedience) then we drift off the course. When we do, we get careless and the Enemy gets a toe-hold, our field fills with weeds, and as I think about it, I could fill the page with metaphors with this. The point is that we are distracted away from Him when **Carelessness Sabotages Our Movement Toward God.**

Comparison – In the twenty-first chapter of John, Jesus is quoted as telling Peter how he (Peter) would die and Peter’s response was, “What about John?” Comparison with others takes the focus off God’s plan for us and sets it in the relative world of the performance of others. Comparison strains relationships too - comparing one friend to another, or to a standard you have in your mind (usually comparing against an impossible ideal person.) The real person is discounted and minimized while you do your analysis. We are off on a

*This is how God has already come alongside His people—for the long haul, way longer than we could ever do for each other, so long in fact, that it stretches to eternity. (See Psalm 121:3-4)*

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## What's So Funny 'Bout Peace, Love and Understanding (no compromise?)?

By *Elodie Emig*

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*(Note: Elodie gave this talk at one of our Group meetings. She is a professor at Denver Seminary and a member of the WGA Board of Directors)*

When Scott asked me to speak on WGA's core values a couple of things came to mind: first, the math of 100% Grace, 100% Truth; second, Elvis Costello's "What's So Funny 'Bout Peace, Love and Understanding?" As to the math, even though I still think it's pretty obvious what Mary was getting at all those years ago with WGA's motto (100% Grace, 100% Truth, No Compromise), I have wondered from time to time whether or not we are dealing with 200% (is that a compromise?), and if so how the quantum physicists might react. Perhaps more to the point of defending our motto, isn't it a bit of an overreach for mere mortals? The obvious answer is, of course; none of us fallen humans can hope to attain such a standard in this life. Its audacity calls to mind, however, that we are to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Christianity has set for its adherents an impossible (this side of heaven) standard, that of perfection, that of ultimate truth. This is a very good thing, however unpopular in post-modern America.

On to Elvis Costello, the refrain of his song popped into my head since, peace,

love and grace, truth, impressed me as being parallel realities. And I liked the idea of exploring grace and truth in terms of understanding, understanding both what grace and truth are, understanding what no compromise entails, and understanding that tolerance does not, or at least should not, mean that all things are permissible.

In our secular culture of tolerance (and whatever this so called tolerance is, it isn't based on mutuality of understanding), there can be no true grace. True grace operates in a framework of absolutes, e.g., we have offended the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and yet he is pleased to show us favor that we in no way deserve. Without truth, the old-fashioned, absolute if-you-don't-believe-it-you-are-wrong kind, grace is cheapened to permissiveness at best and narcissistic unconcern for others at worst. So if we are going to consider 100% grace, we need to look at Truth first.

"What is truth?" is an old question, and one often used to keep the answer at bay. Remember that it was Pilate's response when Jesus told him that "everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice" (Jn 18:37 ESV). Jesus also

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*(What's So Funny continued from page 4)*

said that he was the truth, among other things. I will define truth as “correspondence to reality” (Groothuis, Truth Decay, 86). So the notion that all truths are created equal is nonsense to me. It is either true or it is not that, for example, it is wrong to torture innocent children. I understand the concept of cultural relativism and even accept it up to a point (I was brought up in America, not Africa or Asia, I can't know everything, am not always logical, and can be wrong), but that does not mean that I cease to acknowledge absolute truth. God has designed (or even chance has allowed) reality to be certain things and not others. Truth corresponds to reality; all reality is more than I can grasp, but it still has authority over me. I can tell you that my truth dictates that I am as old as I feel, which is about 28, but that won't change my date of birth, my gray hair or remove my wrinkles.

As I have compared Christianity's truth claims both to reality and to the truth claims of competing religions and worldviews, I have concluded that Christianity offers the best explanation for reality that exists. Because of this I accept the Bible as authoritative and inerrant in all that it intends to communicate. I think that what the Bible has to say goes beyond human opinion

to truth. Post moderns think I am woe-fully naïve, probably uncritical, and possibly just plain stupid. I fear they have been seduced by an impressive lie.

In most systematic theologies, grace is considered a moral attribute of God. Or to look at it another way, grace operates in a moral universe; no morality, no grace. Millard Erickson says that “God deals with his people not on the basis of their merit or worthiness, ... but simply according to their need; ... salvation [is]

the extravagant gift of God's grace” (Christian Theology, 320-321). So in terms of the grand narrative of the Bible, the greatest redemption story ever told, because of God's love, grace and mercy, he provides salvation from the consequences of having broken his law by sending Jesus to die in our place. This is a horror story, rather than good news and

the greatest story ever told, unless we inhabit a moral universe undergirded and upheld by the God of truth and grace.

What does it mean for us to show grace? First, I will submit, it means that we acknowledge that we have none of our own to give. Apart from the indwelling Holy Spirit conforming us to the image of Christ, we are too lost in

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***WGA will not compromise on the truth of God revealed in the Bible, nor will it compromise on its offer of grace to all of us broken men and women who have come through the doors over the years.***

*(What's So Funny continued from page 5)*

our own brokenness to offer grace. It also means that we count the cost of the grace we give, that we affirm that sin has consequences, and that we have some standard by which we determine what is deserved and what is not. Divine grace has never lost sight of the consequences of sin or the price at which the God of justice grants it. Grace does not say all things are permissible, but that all things (except blasphemy of the Holy Spirit) can be forgiven. Grace does not downplay sin or bend truth. Our grace accepts that God is the ultimate judge of the human heart and provides a bridge from those to whom we give it to its divine source. It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict others of sin, not ours. Our job is to love both friend and foe and point them to the cross.

Doesn't "No Compromise" sound antithetical to grace? Perhaps it does at first, but that's where the genius of the 200% comes in. WGA will not compromise on the truth of God revealed in the Bible, nor will it compromise on its offer of grace to all of us broken men and women who have come through the doors over the years. When truth is separated from grace, legalism tends to follow, and God's truth is robbed of his compassion. When grace is not grounded in truth, it becomes a dollar store sham with no lasting power to inspire and empower change. Grace and truth need each other and 200% is about what our bankrupt culture needs.

Tolerance as popularly defined today has little to do with understanding and accepting people who differ from us. We are told that one can't hate the sin and love the sinner; tolerance means loving everything the beloved does. Tell this to the parent whose small child is about to throw the kitten into the fireplace. Tell this to the God who designed us to reflect his glory, when we have rejected him for dangerous idols. Real tolerance means having the humility to agree to disagree after we have listened to and tried to understand another. Real tolerance means that though we are not willing to compromise on truth or grace, we are willing to acknowledge that our understandings of either or both are flawed. Real tolerance is rooted and grounded in love for God, the truth and each other. It is far more robust and costly than the media-endorsed variety. It is the only way to effect consensus that is more than lack of concern or mere capitulation to the majority view. So grace, truth and understanding may not be particularly funny, but they are certainly necessary if we are to live well and promote peace in dangerous times. DoMA may have been defeated, Exodus International may have disbanded, but God's love, grace and truth will never change. That is the absolute truth that keeps me going, that gives me hope, and gives me the assurance that what we do at WGA is of eternal value.

(Sabotage continued from page 3)

side rail as **Comparison Sabotages Our Movement Toward God.**

Complacency is sort of a side effect of Comparison if you happen to come out on top of the comparison game. You could be thinking, “I’m so much better off than. . . , so I can just sit here and enjoy – and then laziness sets in. And while you are sitting there self-satisfied, complacency sets the stage for the forces of the universe to begin to pull you (ever so slowly sometimes, but inexorably) toward chaos—certainly forward motion grinds to a halt. **Complacency Sabotages Our Movement Toward God.**

Critical Spirit – The fault-finding, grumbling and complaining of a critical spirit is a particularly troublesome saboteur. I don’t think it is any mystery why God let a whole generation die out in the wilderness because of their grumbling and complaining. They were so busy looking at the giants, and the daily glitches, trials and tribulations of life; they lost their vision for the Promised Land. Instead of a land flowing with milk and honey, it was only a dangerous place filled with giants. **Critical Spirits Sabotage Our Movement Toward God.**

Compromise - When the standard seems so far out of reach and the choices of the moment seem tempting, when the pain of disappointment or disillusionment seems more than we can bear, the sweet whisper of compromise sounds pretty good. Then we settle for less and wonder why we are dissatisfied and discontent. **Compromise**

**Sabotages Our Movement Toward God.**

Antidotes for these five attitudes are simple and familiar:

*Carelessness* – Concentrate and “take every thought captive” and “make the most of every opportunity.”

*Comparison* - Look to Jesus/Jesus alone for our standards.

*Complacency* - Confession, prayers like, “Lord consume me with a burning fire that melts away complacency.”

*Critical Spirit* - Philippians 4 - cast all cares (things worth criticizing) on Him, then fill our thoughts with whatever is good, true Holy, of good report.

*Compromise* - Long Suffering/Steadfastness, “set our faces like flint” Like Keith Green, we commit to a life of No Compromise on the things that matter to God—to a Holy Obedience to Him.

With attention to the 5 “C’s” of Sabotage and applying their antidotes, the way will be much more clear to move toward Him with joy and freedom.



## September In Review

**September 11th:** Mary will be presented at the American Association of Christian Counselors conference

**September 29th:** WGA presented at a Youth For Christ event

### Thursday Night Group

**September 5th:** 33 people  
**September 12th:** 32 people  
**September 19th:** 47 people  
**September 26th:** 33 people

**Orientation meeting:** 4 new people

## October And Beyond

**October 10th:** WGA will offer a training for leaders at Providence House

**Oct 31-Nov 2:** Mary will be presenting at the Hope for Wholeness conference in North Carolina

**November 2nd:** Intercessory Prayer meeting, 8:00 am at the WGA offices. Come join us as we pray for the needs of the ministry

**November 7-8:** WGA will be speaking at Front Range Christian School

**November 21st:** Monthly Orientation Meeting required for participation in WGA's Thursday Night Group—invite a friend!

### WGA Staff

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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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