



A Measure of Grace

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Transgender *by Roger Jones*

The list of letters that used to include only LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) continues to expand and can be confusing. One current abbreviation I found is LGBPTTQQIIAA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Inter-gender, Asexual, Ally, +others). I won't take the time to go into each of these in this article. I would be happy to communicate with you about any of them if you would like to know more. In this article, we will be discussing transgender.

Transgender seems to be in the news more and more these days. While this is not a new topic, what seems to be different is that society is beginning to see transgender people as actual "people" rather than freaks. A number of years ago, Chastity Bono (now Chaz) became the face of transgender when she began the transition from female to male.

Because the transition was in the spotlight, Chaz opened the eyes of many to the reality of this issue.

To be honest, transgender
(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Transgender	1
Simple...	3
Alone or Lonely?	4
June in Review	8
July and Beyond	8

Where Grace Abounds
P.O. Box 18871
Denver, Colorado 80218

Office: 303/863-7757
Fax: 303/863-7769

info@wheregraceabounds.org
www.wheregraceabounds.org



(Transgender continued from page 1)

is something that I find myself confused by and uncomfortable with. Over the years, first as a participant and later working at WGA (altogether almost twenty years), I have encountered a number of people for whom being transgender is a struggle. While I am guessing that I am more comfortable in these situations than most would be, I still find myself feeling self-conscious and unsure how to look at the person. Am I staring? Am I not making enough eye contact, because I am nervous and don't want to seem like I am staring? Simple things like offering a hug or a pat on the back seem awkward as well. Of course, this also depends on the person I am interacting with.

In my own journey to come to a better understanding, I began to do a bit of research. I thought it might be helpful to share some of what I have discovered over the years. There are quite a few terms used to describe transgender, some of which are inaccurate. Perhaps the best place to begin is with some definitions. I will do my best to be accurate in my descriptions. One of the difficulties with labels is that they never fit exactly. This is part of the reason the LGBT abbreviation continues to expand.

Transgender (or simply trans) is an umbrella term that is used generally to describe anyone whose perceived gender does not match the gender suggested by their genitals. This overarching term includes transsexuals and some cross-dressers.

Typically speaking, drag kings and drag queens are not considered transgender as they dress like another gender for entertainment purposes only.

Transsexual is a term used to describe a person whose gender identity does not match the gender suggested by their genitals and who may undergo a medical procedure to align the two. They may also live as a different gender than their biology suggests without having a medical procedure.

Transvestite is a term used to describe a person who dresses (cross dressing) like another gender than the one suggested by their genitalia. Generally, this term refers to people who dress like a different gender for some type of sexual gratification. Used this way, transvestite does not fit under the umbrella of transgender unless the person cross dressing does not identify with the sex their biology suggests. It is often considered offensive to interchange transsexual and transvestite. . Some consider the term transvestite itself to be offensive, so it may be helpful to ask how a person prefers to be referred to.

Here's a helpful bit of information from The Gender Identity Center of Colorado website:

"It is requested that a transgender person be called by their name that coordinates with their chosen gender. Please use the appropriate

(Continued on page 6)



Over the years I have had conversations with people who are disillusioned or discouraged by the complexity of their struggle and the constant messages they get from well-meaning people who just wish they would “get right with God,” or “just stop it,” or “let go and let God.” As I listen to their anger, confusion, and the question that rise out of them, I wonder just how well I would do in their circumstances.

Although I rarely say it out loud these days, sometimes the clichés come rushing to my mind as well. On those days and times when I don’t know what to say, or when the time has dragged on and on with no breakthrough in sight, I look at their situations from their perspective, and try to understand their struggle, then I sit in silence with them as Job’s friend did in the first days (the only good days, I am told.) I sit quietly fighting down the temptation to say something that will make the pain go away—their pain and mine on their behalf.

I am reminded of an obscure little portion of Scripture:
Prophets and priests alike,
All practice deceit.
They dress the wound of my people

Simple, But Not Easy

By Mary Heathman

(reprinted from 2000)

As though it were not
Serious
“Peace , peace,” they say
When there is no peace.

Most of the people I work with know that their struggle is with sin—with their own prosperity to want that which God has forbidden. They readily confess and repent deeply. And they commit to the Lord that they will wait for His provision. And they wait.....and wait...and wait. The loneliness deepens and they cry out with the Psalmist, “How long, O Lord?”

The living Bible expresses the Scripture a little differently:

You can’t heal a wound
By saying it’s not there!
Yet the priests and prophets
Give assurance of peace when all is war.
Jer 6:14

The American Psychological Association is trying to say the wound isn’t there. There is no need to seek healing and the believer knows s/he is being deceived. Yet, the message from the people of God is all too often, “peace, peace,” and the sexual sinner knows s/he is being patronized and goes home with his/her wound

(Continued on page 7)

#Chasistyw/truth&grace Intimacy: Alone or Lonely? By Scott Kingry



*I have a friend, also recently divorced, who explains to me that the loneliness he experienced in his marriage was more devastating than anything he has experienced since. "Lying in bed at night next to someone you once promised to love and knowing there is no way to bridge the gulf between you," he says, "that is the most crushing loneliness of all." I believe him ... and as the famous quote says... "If you are afraid of loneliness, don't marry." I happen to feel differently. I find the loneliness of no one knowing if your plane lands on time, of no one to call if you lock yourself out of your house or your alternator dies—I find that loneliness worse. The loneliness of the everyday, more than the loneliness of estrangement. **Lauren Winner, Still.***

Inevitably whenever you talk to people about love, they'll begin to share stories about painful episodes of heartbreak. When you talk about belonging and connection, they'll speak about times of rejection. When the discussion turns to intimacy, it's not surprising that people will eventually admit to deep pangs of loneliness. God has hardwired us for relationship, closeness and intimacy, but we can't really move forward until we address and wrestle with those fears and barriers

in the common human experience of loneliness.

I was chatting with a friend at lunch the other day about his move to Austin in a few weeks. He is currently single, in his 3rd year at med school and has been living in a small apartment in another part of Texas. His move across the state will suddenly entail the addition of 2 housemates; he spent several minutes lamenting the loss of living alone. I resonated quickly. For me, there is something absolutely luxurious about coming home after a wild noisy day, closing and locking the door and drinking in the silence and solitude of my tiny 20 by 20 studio condo. No need to talk to anyone or process anything—just stir up a martini and slip into a good book or the next episode of *Bones*—heaven. But it's also ok not to add any of these distractions. It's taken a couple of decades of practice, but this crazy little extrovert who always needed something on, the TV or music to fill every minute of space at home, can now actually enjoy and be comfortable with silence and being alone. As Mother Teresa often said, "*The fruit of silence is prayer*" and I would concur. Having the quiet space to think my thoughts and to feel my emotions will sometimes bubble up into a spontaneous prayer, talking to

(Continued on page 5)

(Intimacy continued from page 4)

Him and having some valuable time with God—like exhaling a heavy burden you’ve been carrying around all day. It’s sort of similar to being a monk in his own small private “cell” at the monastery. My condo seems to be the right size.

Meanwhile, to my married friends (and especially those with children) “alone time” is a precious commodity. Coming home, closing and locking the door still means there are things that need attending—a to-do list that seems never ending I would imagine. Friends tell me they might get a few priceless minutes alone late at night, a couple minutes in their car or, if they’re really lucky, several lavish hours when everyone in the house is at work or school. I remember going on a men’s retreat with my church, and feeling sort of put off. When the opportunity to forge new friendships and get acquainted with some of the married guys came up during the free time—all they wanted to do was nap! Alright gentlemen, I get it now.

Meanwhile, the “sexual and romance narrative” still hangs over our culture like a cloud. As I mentioned in my last article the mantras of “*desperately finding my other half*” and the hope of “*you complete me*” continue to seep into our minds and

emotions. From our culture’s perspective (even in some Christian circles), if I’m not in a head-over-heels, intense romantic relationship or not having a healthy dose of sex many times a day, something is dreadfully wrong with me. We’re misled to believe these are the only two ways of expressing love and our sexuality. I catch myself sometimes enviously noticing couples doing simple things together, and suddenly my luxurious alone time turns into just plain loneliness. I’m not sure how the training

God has hardwired us for relationship, closeness and intimacy, but we can’t really move forward until we address and wrestle with those fears and barriers in the common human experience of loneliness.

came about, but I’ve noticed a trend among my single friends. For some odd reason we think we have to grocery shop alone, go to the mall alone, enjoy our hobbies alone and somehow get ourselves to medical appointments and sit through possible bad news by ourselves. Now we know that’s not true, but even so, it’s easy to get caught in the trap of this weird belief system.

In what seems like a “couple’s world,” singleness has yellow highlighter marks all over it.

But my married friends still haven’t escaped loneliness either, sad to say. I’ve heard many men and women relate to the quotation above: *the loneliness experienced within marriage* is the most devastating and crushing of all. It must truly be devastating I often think. Our culture makes shiny

(Continued on page 6)

(Intimacy continued from page 5)

promises through this “sexual and romance narrative” that a lifelong companion, one with whom we share every aspect of life—money, children, experiences, a home, even the most intimate union of our very physical bodies—will somehow keep loneliness at bay. How disillusioning it must be that it still creeps in even in the midst of all this “togetherness.” I imagine that this disillusionment is the catalyst for many a divorce.

So if romance, sex and marriage aren’t the cure for loneliness—what

is? Whether married, single, introverted or extroverted, we all need connection, relationship and ultimately an intimacy with ourselves, lots of different types of “others,” all rooted in our deepest place of intimacy with God Himself. The next logical question that usually follows this statement is “What does that look like?” Stay tuned as we explore various facets of the answer in the next series of articles.

(Transgender continued from page 2)

ate pronoun also. The general rule is to go by the gender presentation, and if ambiguous just ASK. PLEASE notice the often used word Transgendered is not listed because it is NOT a word! We ask you if you would use Gayed or Lesbianed?”

Another factor, and one of the reasons I tried to be careful with the above definitions, is that many dealing with transgender issues believe that there are more than the traditional two genders of male and female. There is no agreement (that I can discern) about what the additional genders may be. The belief that there are other genders is based upon the reality that many do not relate to the concepts of male and female (as society defines them). There must be more.

Although I can imagine a number of people reading this rolling their eyes by now, I think we need to challenge ourselves to think more deeply. Regardless of whether or not you believe transgender people are dealing with deep psychological wounds, the fact is that they do exist. Like so many other groups of people that may make us uncomfortable, transgender people are not going to simply disappear to make us feel better.

I leave you with a couple of questions to consider:

- How can I challenge myself to treat a transgender person better?
- Regardless of my personal views, is God asking me to treat people as a problem that needs fixing, or as His child?

(Simple, but Not Easy *continued from page 3*)

treated superficially. The bandages come quickly loose.

I have often yearned for the days when the hurt of my children be soothed away with a kiss on the “owie” and a warm cuddle on my lap. Their hurt are too big these days and I find myself overwhelmed Jer 6:13::4 NIV. In ministry, too, on the days I am trying in my own strength to meet the needs of the people, I succumb to the easy answers and quick fixes. Other days, when I am in sync with the Holy Spirit, He and I are strong enough together to face the reality of deepest wounds without sinking into despair or covering them over too quickly.

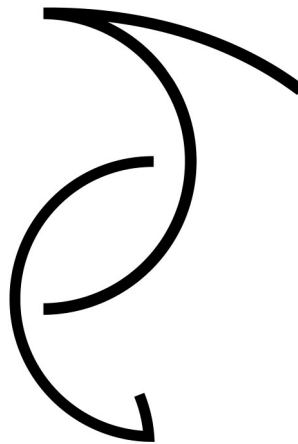
Therein lies the solution for all sinners great and small—we need God; His grace is sufficient to meet all our needs. And when we are weak, we can feed on His word for strength. In the words of a contemporary Christian song, “Your word is strength to me, a basic need I can’t ignore; Your word is strength to me, I’m always in need of more.”

So, you see, the solution is simple—we are just to stay in Christ, filled with His Spirit and He will change our heart and guide us into all truth! So I’ve been doing that for years and years, and on my own growing edge it doesn’t get easier. Some days I feel like I’m back to square one. I confess and repent deeply and commit to live a life of surrender to the will of my Father and wait for His provi-

sion. And I wait,...and wait,...and wait. I cry out, “How long, O Lord?” It sounds familiar doesn’t? I realize then that we are alike—sinners in need of forgiveness.

I pray that we never define ourselves by our wounds, for in Him we are healed, are being healed, and will be healed. Yet may we never treat each other’s wounds as though they were slight, but carefully bind each other up in truth and love.

Praise God for His Grace that is lavished upon us. May we all grow up to understand and live in the peace and joy of His presence all the days of our lives. Will you help me pray toward that end?





June In Review

June 8th: WGA Leadership Meeting

June 18th: WGA Board Meeting—please pray for our Board of Directors as they steer the direction of the ministry

June 28th: WGA Event - Lakeside Amusement Park



July And Beyond

July 9th: WGA presenting at Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting Youth Camp

July 17th: Monthly Orientation Meeting required for participation in WGA's Thursday Night Group—invite a friend!

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

October 17-19: WGA Leadership Retreat

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
Elodie Ballantine Emig

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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