



A Measure of Grace

May 2015
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A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

Ministry Updates and Prayer Requests *by Roger Jones*

Thanks to all of you who regularly read *A Measure of Grace* and pray for Where Grace Abounds. The WGA Staff, Board of Directors, and Leadership Team could not effectively meet the needs of those God brings to us without your support. Please remember WGA in your prayers in the coming days, specifically for these areas:

Beyond Containmentment

WGA's newest area of ministry is working with men and women (and their families), who have been convicted of a sexual offense. God placed this neglected people group on Mary Heathman's heart a number of years ago. Mary is spending about half of her work week developing this area of ministry and reaching out to those in need. There are currently two Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) running, which require four to seven volunteers each, to help transition former offenders from prison back into the community. Please lift

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up this area of ministry in prayer. If you would like to learn more about
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it, please contact us at the WGA office.
We need more volunteers!

New Staff Member

Effective this month, WGA has a new part-time staff member. Her name is Dianne O'Brian. She, along with her husband Rich, have spent many years in ministry in a variety of locations. She is the first WGA employee hired to focus exclusively on the work of Beyond Containment. Dianne is coordinating communication efforts with those who are currently incarcerated as well as participating in a COSA group (see above). She is also performing many of Beyond Containment's administrative tasks. Dianne is raising her financial support, so please pray for her as she begins this process.

Transgender Issues

Increasingly, people are contacting us dealing with transgender issues. The "transgender" label covers a broad number of presentations, including gender dysphoria (perceived gender and biological gender do not match) and cross-dressing. There are very few resources for people with such struggles, and most in the mental health field are required to help their clients embrace their feelings. Please pray for those facing these challenges and for us as we seek out resources to benefit them.

Financial Update

WGA ended 2014 with \$18,000 more in the bank than we started the year with. December is always a big month and this one proved no different. God showed up and brought us out of a pretty deep deficit. The first few months of 2015 have also been typical, as WGA's lowest income months. That extra we received in



2014 helped to get us through March 2015. Just last month (April), WGA received a significant donation that replenished the savings we dipped into during the first quarter. We are very grateful for God's provision!

Thursday Night Group

WGA continues with its weekly support group meeting on Thursday nights. 2015 marks 29 years of offering groups and educational resources for those struggling with their sexuality and relationships, as well as for their family members. Over the summer and into the Fall, we will begin a campaign to remind churches and others that WGA is a resource for them. Please pray for this endeavor and ask God to multiply our efforts to bring people in need into our programs.

Annual WGA Picnic

On May 23rd, WGA will host its annual picnic at Alamo Placita Park. This year, we will honor Mary Heathman, WGA's Founding Director, as she hits a major milestone. We will be celebrating her 70 years of life, her 29 years of ministry, and the coming years of ministry that await her. This is NOT a retirement party! Mary remains in a full-time capacity with WGA and plans to continue as long as God allows. Come join us to celebrate Mary!

Public Image ~ Does It Matter? Part 3

By Mary Heathman (reprint)

Author's note: I am continuing in a season of reflection on how to be "in the world, but not of it," and how we might be salt and light in the contexts in which we find ourselves every day. Here is the third in a series of articles written in 2008 that are still right on target. As you read, I hope you will be thinking and praying for WGA leaders as we continue to hold up the banner of truth and grace in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. -- Mary Heathman

Last month I quoted from David Kinnamon's book, *UnChristian*, where he wrote of the six perspectives that "Outsiders" have about "Insiders." I also said that in this month's article we would "look at the antidote to some of this bad news." But before I do that, it seems critical to put the specifics off another month or two while I write a bit about what lies beneath the perceptions "they" have about "us."

I believe that the way Christians are perceived is stemming in part from incorrect understanding of what it means to be a Christian. It seems to me that many of the perceptions about Christianity are coming from a wrong definition of the label itself. Thus, we are being judged by how we "ought" to behave rather than simply who we are—sinners as are everyone else, but forgiven and living by the undeserved grace of God that we have received through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

But to a significant portion of the younger population of "Outsiders," Christianity

is about a standard of behavior, rules and regulations, a code of ethics. When they see us behaving in ways that don't match up with that standard, they call us hypocrites.

In a discussion with a friend of mine about the way we Christians are perceived by "Outsiders," she reminded me of a familiar quote from C. S. Lewis. He was prefacing his book by defending what he meant by the label *Christian*. I am presenting his thoughts as a much more lucid argument than I could ever make for defining our terms before we begin talking about how we can affect change in our public image.

C.S. Lewis in the Preface to *Mere Christianity*:

Far deeper objections may be felt - and have been expressed - against my use of the word *Christian* to mean one who accepts the common doctrines of Christianity. People ask: "Who are you, to lay down who is, and who is not a Christian?" or "May not many a man who cannot believe these doctrines be far more truly a Christian, far closer to the spirit of Christ, than some who do?" Now this objection is in one sense very right, very charitable, very spiritual, very sensitive. It has every available quality except that of being useful. We simply cannot, without disaster, use language as these objectors want us to use it. I will try to make this clear by the history of another, and very much less important,

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#Chastityw/truth&grace

Romantic and Sexual Intimacy—Finally!

By *Scott Kingry*

The bottom line is this: God created sex for marriage, and within a Christian moral vocabulary, it is impossible to defend sex outside of marriage. To more liberal readers, schooled on a generation of Christian ethics written in the wake of the sexual revolution, this may sound like old-fashioned hokey, but it is the simple, if sometimes difficult, truth. *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*, **Lauren Winner**.

The Sexual Revolution, according to Wikipedia, is defined as:

A social movement that challenged traditional codes of behavior related to sexuality and relationships throughout the Western World from the 1960s to the 1980s. Sexual liberation included increased acceptance of sex outside of traditional heterosexual, monogamous marriage. Contraception and the pill, public nudity, the normalization of premarital sex, homosexuality and alternative forms of sexuality, and the legalization of abortion followed.

For 50 years we've been living with the increasing consequences of the belief that throwing off the unwieldy shackles of traditional boundaries around our sexuality would lead to a more enlightened way of living. With that in mind, each of us could ask the question—are we really any better off?

I'm imagining a wide variety of answers.

Growing up through the 70s provided an interesting dichotomy to navigate. As "liberation" peaked in 1978 (before the onset of AIDS), folks were enjoying new and inventive ways of having sex for fun and recreation (see anything having to do with Studio 54—wow). I was 15 then and, along with my peers, jumping on the bandwagon, looking for love in all the wrong places and beginning to experiment sexually in the new atmosphere of freedom. But a parallel movement was also active during this decade—the Jesus Movement. With another quick check at Wikipedia, we find: "A movement in Christianity beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s and spreading primarily through North America and Europe, before subsiding by the early 1980s. It was the major Christian element within the new hippie counterculture." (Does anyone remember being baptized in a river by the woods?) In 1980, after a couple of years of empty sexual encounters, at the age of seventeen, I joined the ranks of these new Christians. Jesus had crashed into my life in a very real and tangible way.

Given a more conventional time not so far in the past, even as a crazy, hormonally-driven teenager, I felt a very sincere conviction about my sexual sin. It was a desperate and destructive way of

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grasping for love and acceptance—basically sexualizing my emotional need repeatedly. And though we didn't know exactly what *to* do, the other Christian kids and I definitely knew what was off limits sexually (though we often wanted to know exactly where the line was, so we could dance right up to it and maybe even put a toe just a little bit over). Yet, despite an incredible lack of direction or resources, I learned some very valuable lessons during that season.

Living in Christ meant God wanted **all** the areas of my life, including my sexuality. God wanted me to submit and surrender what I did with my body, how I handled my relationships, how and when I would express my sexuality—to bend myself around Him and His word, not bend *Him* around my desires. Fast forwarding several decades, I am still rooted in these realities—though living them out has produced joyous moments and some crash-and-burn seasons. They require asking the tough questions on a daily basis. Do I trust God with this facet of my life? Does God care about my longings, my physical and emotional needs, my deeper desires? Do I believe I will be happier, healthier and holier if I live within God's structures around my sexuality? The answers have been different at various points; sometimes it is a struggle to believe. Yet, now since the sexual revolution of the 60s is a distant memory and a sex-saturated culture seems just normal—the idea of submitting or surrendering any facet of ourselves to anything or anyone is not only ridiculous, but offensive to most

autonomous individualists. I often ponder the thought—God has put a very few boundaries around the way we express our sexuality and what we do with our bodies, but everyone is incredibly ticked off about it (including myself at times).

So let's chat about what's causing all the commotion. In my last article, we talked about the different kinds of intimacy that are available to us—experiential, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical (healthy, non-sexual touch). These various types of intimacy are foundational for couples as well as singles. The next two categories of intimacy are reserved for couples.

Romantic Touch - There are many ways of being romantic and sexual without being genital. This rich range of sexual expression includes holding, touching, caressing, fondling and kissing. These areas of sexual comfort deepen and extend sexual satisfaction. To explore them requires intimacy and time. (This area caused us to wonder where the "line" was as young Christians).

Physical/Sexual Intimacy - Finally, there is the pleasure driven union of two people that requires trust and vulnerability. Passionately surrendering yourself to another requires trust of your body, trust of your sexuality and ultimate trust of your partner. God has wired our bodies for pleasure. Our sexual equipment is designed with more nerve endings than any other parts of our bodies. But we know it's

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about more than just an orgasm; there are the emotional and relational aspects of sex. To a starving heart, sharing life with someone, feeling valued, affirmed, desired and wanted are equally or even more powerful than the act of sex buy itself. Still, it's easy to see why cultures throughout history have taken this small but potent branch of intimacy and made it into the entire tree.

So the big question is why does God reserve these last two types of intimacy for a specific, covenanted relation-

ship? Is it because sex is the incarnational portrait of the type of intimacy God wants with us? Is it because God values our bodies more than we do? Is it because human life can come from this act and God values life? I'm sure the answers are all, "Yes." There are probably many more reasons that I would love to hear, if you have the time to send your list. Living within God's plan for sexuality and relationships, 50 years after sexual liberation, is not on counter-cultural, but apparently revolutionary.

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word.

The word *gentleman* originally meant something recognisable; one who had a coat of arms and some landed property. When you called someone "a gentleman" you were not paying him a compliment, but merely stating a fact. If you said he was not "a gentleman" you were not insulting him, but giving information. There was no contradiction in saying that John was a liar and a gentleman; any more than there now is in saying that James is a fool and an M.A. But then there came people who said - so rightly, charitably, spiritually, sensitively, so anything but usefully - "Ah but surely the important thing about a gentleman is not the coat of arms and the land, but the behaviour? Surely he is the true gentleman who behaves as a gentleman should? Surely in that sense Edward is far more truly a gentleman than John?" They meant well. To be honourable and courteous and brave is of course a far better thing than to

have a coat of arms. But it is not the same thing. Worse still, it is not a thing everyone will agree about. To call a man "a gentleman" in this new, refined sense, becomes, in fact, not a way of giving information about him, but a way of praising him: to deny that he is "a gentleman" becomes simply a way of insulting him. When a word ceases to be a term of description and becomes merely a term of praise, it no longer tells you facts about the object: it only tells you about the speaker's attitude to that object. (A "nice" meal only means a meal the speaker likes.) A *gentleman*, once it has been spiritualised and refined out of its old coarse, objective sense, means hardly more than a man whom the speaker likes. As a result, *gentleman* is now a useless word. We had lots of terms of approval already, so it was not needed for that use; on the other hand if anyone (say, in a historical work) wants to use it in its old sense, he cannot do so without explanations. It has been spoiled for

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that purpose.

Now if once we allow people to start spiritualising and refining, or as they might say “deepening”, the sense of the word *Christian*, it too will speedily become a useless word. In the first place, Christians themselves will never be able to apply it to anyone. It is not for us to say who, in the deepest sense, is or is not close to the spirit of Christ. We do not see into men's hearts. We cannot judge, and are indeed forbidden to judge. It would be wicked arrogance for us to say that any man is, or is not, a Christian in this refined sense. And obviously a word which we can never apply is not going to be a very useful word. As for the unbelievers, they will no doubt cheerfully use the word in the refined sense. It will become in their mouths simply a term of praise. In calling anyone a Christian they will mean that they think him a good man. But that way of using the word will be no enrichment of the language, for we already have the word *good*. Meanwhile, the word *Christian* will have been spoiled for any really useful purpose it might have served.

We must therefore stick to the original, obvious meaning. The name *Christians* was first given at Antioch (Acts 26) to “the disciples”, to those who accepted the teaching of the apostles. There is no question of its being restricted to those who profited by that teaching as much as they should have. There is no question of its being extended to those who in some refined, spiritual, inward fashion were “far closer to the spirit of Christ” than the less satisfactory of the disciples. The point is not a theological or moral one. It is only a ques-

tion of using words so that we can all understand what is being said. When a man who accepts the Christian doctrine lives unworthily of it, it is much clearer to say he is a bad Christian than to say he is not a Christian. (Lewis, 9-11)

Since C. S. Lewis wrote this, the word *Christian* has, indeed become an almost useless word in its current use. Perhaps even worse than that, it is not a compliment but a criticism. So much so, that “Insiders” are now scrambling for different ways to describe themselves. Some of my friends no longer call themselves *Christians* but *Christ-followers*. This seems reasonable to me; it helps them in their relationships to circumvent the negative connotation that interferes with their witness. But the fact remains that in our public image, we are seen as *Christian*, and what that means to almost half our population is that we are *hypocritical*, etc.

Given this dilemma—we are not what they think we are—how can we address this public image problem? Starting from this place of understanding of who we are and who they believe us to be, I think we can come up with some strategies that can help dispel the misperceptions of Christianity. That will be my next article, an attempt to outline what we can do to dispel negative perceptions of Christianity

If you have some ideas about how that might be done, feel free to call or write! In the meantime, please pray for us. And thank you for caring about the WGA mission.

Lewis, C[live] S[taples]. *Mere Christianity*. 1943. New York: Macmillan, 1952. Print.



April In Review

April 11th: Family and Friends Gathering.

April 19th: WGA Leadership Meeting

Thursday Night Group

April 2nd: 15 people

April 9th: 26 people

April 16th: 29 people

April 23rd: 30 people

April 30th: 27 people

Orientation meeting : 7 new people

May And Beyond

May 4th: Mary will be speaking at a local corrections facility.

May 23rd: WGA Picnic in the Park - 11AM—3PM, Alamo Placita Park. Join us as we celebrate all that God has done through WGA since 1986!

June 1st: Mary spoke at Time to Change

June 6th: Intercessory Prayer meeting, 8:00 am at the WGA offices. Come join us as we pray for the needs of the ministry.

June 18th: Monthly Orientation Meeting required for participation in WGA's Thursday Night Group—invite a friend!

WGA Picnic in the Park!



**Saturday May 23rd
11 AM—3 PM
Call the office for
details**

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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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