



September 2015
Volume 19, Issue 9

A Measure of Grace

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

The Ashley Madison Website Scandal

by Roger Jones

In June, I addressed a couple of big news items that were making waves. One concerned Josh Duggar and the allegations (now confirmed by Duggar) that when he was 14 years old he had sexually abused a number of girls, including two of his sisters. Since that time, another scandal involving Duggar and many many others has erupted.

The Ashley Madison website, an online “dating” service for married people with the motto, “Life is Short. Have an Affair,” was hacked. The service caters specifically to married people who want to have a discrete affair and thus sought to insure that their information was safe. However, millions of user names and profiles, including addresses and pay-

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WGA Partners With One-by-One

Most readers are aware that WGA partners with churches and other organizations in a variety of ways. This month, as we seek to be more intentional in coming alongside the Church, we entered into partnership with One by One (OBO), a long-time friend of WGA. We plan to share resources and skills, gifts and abilities, as the Lord guides and directs. Initially, WGA will be providing content for OBO’s bi-monthly email blasts. This will give WGA visibility to the readers of OBO newsletters; the e-blasts reach 1500 across the United States. The WGA staff will also be featured as speakers available to serve churches who want to understand biblical sexuality and healthy relationships. As we work together in the next few months, pray us as we seek ways to work together to serve the Body of Christ as she seeks to minister in the current culture.

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ment information, were made public. Josh Duggar was among the many with Ashley Madison accounts. As the days and weeks have unfolded since the leak of information, some politicians and religious leaders have been implicated. Many have since resigned from their positions. Other less public figures are also experiencing devastating consequences of being linked to this website.

One of the great dangers (and lies) of the internet is the privacy it has seemed to offer. The Ashley Madison website is just one of many that promised anonymity and secrecy. Before the internet, those interested in pornography or sexual hookups had to leave their homes and risk being seen by someone they knew. The internet comes with less risk of being seen physically, but it is naïve to think that we don't leave a trail of data that leads directly back to us. Nothing is ever lost on the internet and, despite security measures, someone can access its information. All of the internet searches and websites we have ever visited are logged in a server (s) somewhere. I have a history with internet pornography. Even though I have been open and transparent about this, I still

would not want to see every site I've ever visited displayed before me.

I am reminded of a couple of scriptures:

Jeremiah 23:24

“Who can hide in **secret** places so that I cannot see them?” declares the Lord. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the Lord (NIV).

Luke 8:17

For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open (NIV).

While families, political regions, and churches are currently being rocked by the consequences of the Ashley Madison data breach, it ultimately is a good thing. Although some are celebrating the exposure of so many, especially Christians, as hypocrites, I hope that those affected will use this opportunity to get the help they need to overcome addiction. As Scripture has stated so clearly, the things done in secret will be brought out into the light. When

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No Place for Truth?

by Mary Heathman

From 1973 to 1984, I brought considerable confusion and fear into my pursuit of Truth. At first, I didn't know it was God I needed to find. A wise pastor and his wife, Stan and Shirlene, and Dorothy, a wonderful woman who took me under her wing, were the human mainstays of my spiritual direction in those days. All three had in common the most maddening habit of deflecting my questions by turning me to the Bible for answers before they would share their own opinions. "What did you find in Scripture about that, Mary?" This was the consistent response when I brought some intellectual or philosophical complexity before them. So, I did explore what the Bible had to say and benefitted greatly from my own discovery, and from the rousing discussions I had with my mentors as we discussed what I was learning.

I also looked for others who might tell me what they thought. I attended seminars, conferences, and read many books on many topics. My fear and confusion gradually dissipated over time as I learned about God's grace, His love for me, and how He wanted to be with me and

me to be with Him. I was astounded to discover in Isaiah 54, "*You will no longer be a wife rejected, but your creator will be your husband.*" I learned that this was written to God's chosen people, the Israelite nation. But my heart was also personally quickened by this verse. As I laid my pain and longing out before God, He assured me that He did indeed want to be to me what men (and women) couldn't or wouldn't be. Grace had done its work in my heart and, though I have been confused and afraid sometimes since then, I have never again been so profoundly and consistently lonely as I was before I knew His love.

One of the most powerful teachings I heard about grace in those early years came via a series by Alistair Begg. In 1984, I listened to his radio programs and bought his tapes. Over and over again, I listened to soak in the grace of God, as delivered by a man who not only knew God, but also knew his subject. I was blown away by his grasp of philosophy and how easily he could move between quoting Augustine and a contemporary song writer to make his point.

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#Chastityw/truth&grace

Longings and Desires—The Bad News :(

by Scott Kingry

*Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. **Deuteronomy 8:2-3***

My people have committed 2 sins: They have forsaken Me, the Spring of Living Water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. **Jeremiah 2:13**

In the last installment of this ongoing saga, I posed the question, “Does God care about my longings, emotional needs and deeper desires?” If I believe He has my best interest at heart, it might be a tad easier to maintain the sacred boundaries He’s placed around this facet of my life. We explored Scriptures that refer to bodily needs for food, water, hunger and thirst as metaphors for our deep yearnings for love, affirmation, belonging, touch and being truly known (see Isaiah 55:1-2). These needs are God-created, legitimate, and Jesus affirms that their fulfillment at the deepest level is His alone to give.

This theme is threaded throughout Scripture, so it must matter to God a great deal—that’s good news! But continuing to unpack these metaphors of hungering and thirsting, we have to look at the dismal and disappointing story of the Israelites wanderings in the desert.

Whenever I watch *The Ten Commandments* in all its cheesy, 1950s goodness, as Charlton Heston, with arms outstretched, is parting the Red Sea, I can’t help but feel the weariness God’s people must have felt. After all, they had waited 400 years for that moment and now God was answering their anguished cries and finally taking them to the Promised Land. I imagine their hopes were very high. But as usual with humans, it didn’t take long for hope to crash and burn. The next part of the story makes me cringe with conviction.

As the narrative continues, God visibly leads them through the desert as a pillar of cloud or flame. Yet, eventually His people begin to hunger and thirst, which results in a lot of grumbling (and not just in their stomachs). We see a pattern as the story unfolds: God is purposefully bringing them to places where there is no food and water. What does He do? He sweetens bitter water, rains down quail, pulls water out of a hard rock and feeds His people out of His own hand with manna He specially

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(Longings and Desires *continued from page 4*)

created. His provision and care for His people is steadfast. God isn't toying with the Israelites (or us), as is clear from Deut. 8:2-3. God seems to be saying what Jesus repeats centuries later, "Don't waste your energy striving for perishable food like that. Work for the food that sticks with you food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides. ...I am the Bread of Life" (**John 6:27, 35, The Message**).

God is attempting to get to something deeper in His people, but they respond with whining, complaining, disbelieving, rebelling, and binging on quail till it's coming out their noses. They create and worship a golden calf and eventually, on the brink of the Promised Land, refuse to enter. They actually desire to go back to slavery in Egypt. I'm sure this resonates with you as it does with me. When I'm tired of waiting for God's timing in meeting a need, when I feel as though He's withholding something from me, when I feel emotionally starved as though I were wandering through a desert; what is my response? I tend to do exactly what the Lord describes in Jeremiah 2:13. I abandon the Living Water of Christ, take matters into my own hands and start reacting in destructive ways to my desires—that's the bad news. Here are a few unhelpful or even harmful ways we deal with our desires:

We misdirect our desires: Our desires get tangled up and attached to other things/addictions, such as substances, pornography, behaviors (e.g., binging/purging), unhealthy people, toxic or

dependent relationships.

We deny our desires: We shame ourselves for having needs and act as though we are self-reliant. We discount them and pretend they don't matter. We over-spiritualize or use cynicism as a self-protective barrier.

We become demanding with our desires: We feel entitled, become self-focused, life and relationships are always on our terms. It's another's job to make us feel good about ourselves; our expectations/desires/needs must be met; we demand to feel good, comfortable etc., and in our time-frame.

It is bad news indeed. So, in the context of a unique, covenantal relationship with God, this small band of misfit people turned on Him. In the centuries that followed, they did it again and again. We are still in this same story even today. How amazing God is to continue being faithful to us, never letting our proverbial shoes wear out as we wander our own self-created deserts! Perhaps by orchestrating heart-level hunger and thirst in our lives, God is trying to get to something deeper in us? Is there a way we might manage our desires and cooperate with God better? We'll chat about that next time; stay tuned.



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things are done in secret, there is almost always shame attached; otherwise, why keep it a secret? When the secrets are brought into the light, there is opportunity for people to face the shame that has kept them bound for so long.

Will you pray with me for those who are trapped in sexual addiction? It seems so easy to ask, “Why don’t they just stop?” This question is fair, but it also oversimplifies the situations. Why would reasonable, intelligent people risk so much for an affair or a sexual outlet? Addiction distorts reality and truth. It leads people to

believe they are invincible or conversely, that they are so worthless that nothing they do matters. Let’s pray that people (including ourselves) will know and understand the true value of who they are in Christ.

I’ll close with another Scripture:

Galations 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened by a yoke of slavery (NIV).

(No Place for Truth? continued from page 3)

Recently, I looked up Alistair Begg and found he has a number of his old messages from 1984 on YouTube. I dipped into a few of them and was encouraged and refreshed by his timely teachings. Looking for what his take on our current culture might be, I researched and found some recent messages. It is particularly gratifying to find that the Lord is still speaking through this man—directly to my heart. This time he is teaching about reality, about truth, about the need to proclaim God’s heart and mind.

Here are a few nuggets that Begg

uses as quoted from his talk, “No Place For Truth,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLdX7D3Jy4A>, uploaded to YouTube in February, of this year:

Henry Allen, a columnist writing in the Wall Street Journal, explains, “For the first time in my 72 years, I have no idea what is going on. The most important thing in our culture isn’t change, but the fact that reality itself is dwindling, fading like sun struck wallpaper. Facebook enshrines banality. We have individualism but we have no privacy. We are all

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outsiders with no inside to be outside of. There is no arc, no through line, no destiny. As the British Tommies sang in the trenches of WWI, to the tune of Old Lang Syne, ‘We’re here, because we’re here because we’re here, because we’re here.’”

Will organized religion die? I got talking to a girl from an Episcopal youth group in Missouri, Allen writes, “‘Episcopalianism is great’, she said, ‘you don’t have to believe anything!’”

Like most people, I used to think the world would go on in the way it was going on with better meds and the arrival of the occasional i-Pad or an earthquake. That was when I knew what was going on. I worry that reality itself is fading like the Cheshire cat, leaving behind only a smile that grows ever more alarming.

Quoting Isaiah 59:14 as having described this very thing that is happening in our world: “So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter.”

Commenting on the belief of Christian Science that pain is an illusion,

Begg recites a limerick: “There once was A Christian Scientist from Diehl, who said pain wasn’t real; but if you sit on a pin and the point enters in, you will dislike what you fancy you feel.”

I hope I have given you enough of a taste of Alistair Begg that you will find his talk on YouTube and really spend some time (it’s an hour long and worth every minute) thinking about our culture and how we should respond.

Alistair Begg describes three possible options, “Two I think we should avoid: admonition and accommodation, and only one I think we should adopt--proclamation.” Next month, I will talk a bit about his options, apply it to WGA and how it seems the Lord is leading us these days.

I have adopted a daily prayer for September –will you pray it with me for the next month?

Prayer of St Augustine (354-430)

O thou, who art the light of the minds that know thee, the life of the souls that love thee, and the strength of the wills that serve thee; help us so to know thee that we may truly love thee; so to love thee that we may fully serve thee, whom to serve is perfect freedom.



August In Review

August 13th–16th: Mary at Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting

August 15th: WGA Event—Summer BBQ

August 16th: WGA Leadership Meeting

September And Beyond

September 2nd: Roger and Scott will be speaking at Wellspring Church

October 2nd: Scott participating on panel at Greenwood Church

October 3rd: Intercessory Prayer meeting, 8:00 am at the WGA offices. Come join us as we pray for the needs of the ministry.

October 16th–18th: Annual WGA Leadership Retreat

November 22nd: Scott Speaking at Foothills Fellowship

Upcoming Event! **Understanding the Gender Dysphoric/Transgender Experience**

**Thursday November 5th, 7-9 PM
Open to the Public**

**Friday November 6th, 11 AM–1PM
For Pastors and Leaders**

Please call the WGA Office for further details

Thursday Night Group

**August 6th: 19 people
August 13th: 16 people
August 20th: 25 people
August 27th: 20 people**

Orientation meeting : 6 new people

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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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