



April 2016
Volume 20, Issue 4

A Measure of Grace

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

Longing for Connection: Seminar Recap *by Roger Jones*

On March 31st, WGA was pleased to host the seminar, “Longing for Connection: Addicted to Love and Sex in the Digital Age.” Two friends of the ministry, C. Paige Smith and Tracy Roberts, both counselors in the Denver area and graduates of Denver Seminary, were the presenters. Almost 70 people attended the event, which was very encouraging to see.

The presentation began with a definition of sex addiction:

People who have become addicted to using the intensity of sexual fantasy and activity for emotional distraction and self-soothing are essentially drug addicts, but instead of using something obtained externally to numb out and escape such as pills or alcohol, they have learned to exploit their internal pleasure-producing processes—their own neurochemistry. The self-induced neurochemical stimulation provided by hours of looking at porn, playing virtual sex games, being sexual on webcams and cruising for sexual or romantic partners on dating sites, social media, and apps becomes their drug of choice.¹

(Continued on page 2)



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

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

Email:
info@wheregraceabounds.org
Website:
www.wheregraceabounds.org



(Seminar Recap *continued from page 1*)

Paige and Tracy outlined the characteristics of sex addiction, including 1) acting out: a pattern of out of control sexual behavior, 2) an ongoing desire or effort to limit sexual behavior, and 3) regularly increasing the amount of sexual experience because the current level of activity is no longer sufficiently satisfying.² These were just a few of the characteristics discussed. For more info, refer to the workbook *Facing the Shadow* by Patrick Carnes.

They also offered a definition of love addiction: “A coping mechanism whereby an individual is obsessed with a fantasy he/she has created about another person, believing he/she is ‘loving’ the other but in fact objectifying the other person through the use of the fantasy.”³

In addition, they explained the characteristics of love addiction, some of which were: 1) assigning a disproportionate amount of time, attention, and value above themselves to the person to whom they are addicted, and this focus often has an obsessive quality about it, 2) having unrealistic expectations for unconditional positive regard from the other person in the relationship, and 3) neglecting to care for or value themselves while they’re in the relationship.⁴ I encourage you to read more from the books referenced in the footnotes.

Research conducted in the 1980s suggested that 3% to 5% of U.S. population struggled with addictive sexual behaviors. In the 1990s this figure doubled after the internet was introduced.⁵ Paige and Tracy went on to discuss some of the ways that technology is being utilized to sustain both love and sex addictions:

- Joining sexual membership communities
- Posting personal profiles – hooking up with other people online or in real life
- Chat rooms with others with similar sexual interests
- Pornography
- Erotica
- Exchanging sexual texts, emails, photos
- Webcam sexual activities
- Apps (mini-programs for use on smart phones and other internet devices)
- Social Media – Facebook, dating sites
- Virtual Sex Games – fantasy avatars. Research tells us that 12% of today’s websites are pornographic, 25% of search engine “requests” are porn-related, and 35% of all downloads are of sexualized imagery.⁶

Finally, Paige and Tracy talked about hope. While many find themselves unwittingly addicted, they are not without resources to gain freedom. Paige and Tracy offered some suggestions:

- Find a professional therapist trained in the treatment of addictions AND sexual disorders
- Find a support group
- Find an accountability partner
- Throw out all physical material related to your problem
- Go through all your computer files and smartphone *while being monitored by your accountability partner.*
- Cancel any memberships to websites and apps

(Continued on page 7)



Where Grace Abounds (WGA) is thirty years old this year. For months, during staff meetings for prayer and for business we have been talking and thinking about the accumulated accomplishments of three decades of ministry. We have laughed and cried some as memories bubble to the surface as we talk. This collective remembering touches on the very roots of my call to ministry as we praise God for His guidance and direction and provision all these years.

For the next few months, I would like to write some about the roots of WGA, the calling on my life and how it has manifested itself all these years. I invite you come along with me as I remember.

I will begin with a reprint of most of an article I wrote in August of 2003. I wrote then about the rationale and scriptural base for why WGA offered its services at no charge. So far, during all these thirty years of ministry, we have been able to continue this practice because so many of you, our readers and supporters, have given of your resources. I was refreshed in the re-reading of my thoughts from over a decade ago and encouraged that the words still ring so very true to the yearning of my heart for people who struggle with sexual and relational conflicts.

Reprint from: A Measure of Grace, August, 2003:

“ . . . in the organizational beginnings of WGA, just as I was thinking through a

WGA ~ Why? *By Mary Heathman*

plan for charging for counseling and group participation, my heart was heavy and I felt pressure in my chest. Then I did what I always do under such stress—I cried! And in the midst of the tears, I heard the song on the radio as if it had been turned up louder all of a sudden:

Freely, freely, you have received;ⁱ

Freely, freely, give.ⁱⁱ

Go in my name, and because you believe,

Others will know that I live.

I had my answer and was relieved, and grateful. I also felt that it would be good to get confirmation before I charged on ahead. In this month's article, I will share the results of that search for confirmation: more biblical references and the rationale behind WGA's decision to offer its services to group members without charge.

In a search of the Scriptures, I found good reasons for charging for ministry services. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul makes assumptions like: a soldier is to be paid, an orchard worker should receive some of its fruit to eat, and the shepherd who feeds the flock should also drink of the milk of the flock. The same passage refers to the law of Moses, “Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn.” Paul goes on to infer that he and Barnabas, by virtue of their work among the people have a right to receive provision from them.ⁱⁱⁱ

These passages gave me pause—it seemed scripture endorsed a servant

(Continued on page 6)

#Chastityw/truth&grace

Barriers to Intimacy: Movements Away from Vulnerability

By Scott Kingry

*To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable (C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*).*

“The intention and outcome of vulnerability is trust, intimacy and connection. The outcome of oversharing is distrust, disconnection - and usually a little judgment” (Brene Brown).

We are created in the image of a relational God. We are designed for connection. We long for deep, intimate and meaningful relationships. This all sounds very idealized, but a frequently asked question at Where Grace Abounds is “Why am I not experiencing deeper forms of intimacy in my relationships?” Intimacy seems elusive at times. One of my observations after decades of Thursday night groups is that we face a constant conflict within our own hearts. One side desires to

move towards people or environments that provide opportunities to foster this kind of intimacy. The other side of our heart (that which has been hurt, bruised and broken) vows, “I will not let myself be vulnerable to that type of pain or rejection again.” Sadly, it’s this self-protective side of our heart that wins out more often than most of us would like. This side erects barriers and movement away from vulnerability, yet we know that relational depth can’t be reached without some healthy form of openness in our lives. So in this finally final article, let’s explore some obstacles we need to remove or reduce in order that we might truly connect.

Ambivalence: We have two mutually-exclusive, legitimate needs at work here, as I described above. We need and long for connection and relationships, yet we also long to be safe and self-protected. This causes a “pushing and pulling” effect we often sense in ourselves and others. As long as we continue to land on the extremes of relating (living detached and self-protective lives, or over-attaching and becoming emotionally dependent), we’ll rarely experience depth in our relationships.

Shame: The deep, internalized shame we feel keeps us hidden and perfection-

(Continued on page 5)

(Intimacy continued from page 4)

istic (no one will love me if they really know me), and from living authentically. Connection is about being truly seen, heard and valued as Brene Brown so often points out. Shame drives disconnection and perpetuates the feeling that we are not worthy of love.

Fear: I think we all fear intimacy to some degree—vulnerability is scary. We all shy away from it at times. Trauma and abuse often produce distrust of other people and increased anxiety when we are faced with another who desires that a relationship to go deeper. Such variables as body shame or feeling inadequate in our masculinity or femininity can also accompany fear of closeness. We fear rejection.

Control: Desire for control is a fairly standard response we have to shame and fear. Remember the vow we made that we would never let ourselves be vulnerable to that pain again? So we end up controlling people and situations, demanding everything on our terms in hopes we won't experience hurt.

Addiction: Various addictions (drugs, sex, work, drinking, etc.) numb us, providing an escape from negative emotions. Unfortunately, we can't be selective about what we numb and also lose touch with the positive emotions (joy, gratitude, intimacy) that normally make us present to relationships. It is also true that the cyclical process of finding, maintaining and recovering from the shame of an addictive episode leaves very little time for intimacy and closeness.

Sexualizing/Romanticizing People and Relationships:

Intimacy, trust and connection take a lot of time and space to develop. Rather than taking the slow and patient approach to building relationships, we can get in the habit of immediately sexualizing or romanticizing our emotional needs. This “side-stepping” of the intimacy-building process is really a form of detachment which moves us away from vulnerability.

Lack of Vision: Finally, we lack emotional closeness because so many of us rarely experience it or have never had that modeled for us: “My people perish for lack of vision.” We get in our routines, maintain the status quo and settle for much less relationally than God desires for us. By creating environments of healing (various support groups, counseling, etc.), providing tools along with resources and offering points of education, we can address wounds, barriers and negative habits we've acquired and pursue restoration. Our great task becomes clearing space for a larger vision of what God would like to offer us in our relationship with Him and others—that we might thrive and flourish. Coming alongside people who have taken on this task is the mission that God has given Where Grace Abounds. We hope we are true to our calling as we enter a new decade of ministry.



(WGA—Why? *continued from page 3*)
earning a wage from those he served. But I read a bit further, and found the passages that matched my heart's response to the song on the radio:

1 Corinthians 9:12,15 “ . . . If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.”

WGA offers its services free of charge because we want the good news of God's provision to come without the distraction that payment for services might bring. We do not want the message of God's grace and truth to be hindered—people might think they are buying it from us rather than receiving the Lord's provision as a gift!

1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.

WGA offers its services free of charge because we consider it a personal blessing to us, although we know that we have the right to do so.

2 Corinthians 7:2; 12:17 Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one; we have corrupted no one; we have exploited no one. Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you?

WGA offers its services free of charge so that people whose hearts have been long closed, exploited by many—even in the Lord's camp—may know that WGA is a safe place, we want only to give, expecting nothing in return.

2 Corinthians 11:8 I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you.

WGA offers its services free of charge so that the Body of Christ may have the privilege of partnering with us to provide for the needs of those who are sexually and relationally broken. This is a humbling scripture, as Paul calls it “robbing other churches” when he receives support from them in order to serve those the Lord brought to him. I don't know what he meant by that description, but his heart, (and mine) is so clearly expressed in the next few verses.

*2 Corinthians 11:9; 12:14 And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. . . . I will not be a burden to you, because **what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.***

WGA Provides its services without charge because we don't want to add burdens on the backs of those who already carry heavy loads of despair, grief, fear, and doubt. We are as surrogate parents in their lives, caring for them with no requirement that they should pay us back.

In conclusion, I just want to say that WGA is, (as best we could follow Him all these years,) a work that is ordered, guided and directed, and sustained by the Holy Spirit. As such, our decision to offer services to group members without charge, and to petition the Body of Christ

(Continued on page 7)

(WGA—Why? continued from page 6)
for support of our efforts, is in response to our sense of how God has directed us.”

Author's note to conclude: *WGA isn't just celebrating thirty years of ministry. We are celebrating thirty years of partnership with some of the most faithful brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ—our prayer partners and financial supporters. For you, we are most grateful; by your sacrificial support of this ministry we are humbled. May the*

Lord continue to bless you all as you have blessed so many through your gifts.

ⁱFreeley, Freely, Carol Owens, 1972, Bud John Songs, Inc.

ⁱⁱMatthew 10:8

ⁱⁱⁱ1Corin 9:6-10

(Seminar Recap continued from page 2)

- Stay away from “gray area” activities
- Orient home and/or work computer (s) in a public facing direction so that other people can see what you're doing online
- Display inspirational photos
- Purchase and install filtering/accountability software.⁷

It was a blessing to learn more about these topics and to consider ways to find help for ourselves and those we love who are struggling with sex and/or love addiction. If you would like to learn more about some options for internet filtering/accountability software, we would be happy to provide you with a list of options that the presenters prepared. Stay tuned for more seminar topics that will be coming your way later in the year!

¹ Rob Weiss and Jennifer P. Schneider, *Always Turned On: Sexual Addiction in the Digital Age* (Gentle Path, 2015), pg. 34.

² Patrick Carnes, *Facing the Shadow: Starting Sexual and Relationship Recovery* (Gentle Path, 2010), pgs. 49-50.

³ Pia Mellody, *Facing love addiction: giving yourself the power to change the way you love* (Harper, 2003), pg. 15.

⁴ Melody, pgs. 22-23; Weiss and Schneider, pg. 76.

⁵ A.Cooper, D. E. Putman, L.A. Planchon, and S.C. Boies, “Online Sexual Compulsivity, Getting Tangled in the Net,” *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity* 6 (1999): pgs. 79-104.

⁶ Dhawal Damania, “Internet Pornography Statistics,” accessed May 28, 2014, <http://thedinforgraphics.com/2011/12/23/internet-pornography-statistics/> in *Always Turned On: Sexual Addiciton in the Digiital Age* - Rob Weiss.

⁷ Weiss and Schneider, pgs. 123-126.



March In Review

March 12th: Family and Friends Gathering.

March 22nd: Mary spoke at Tuesday Morning Joy

March 31st: Longing for Connection workshop

Thursday Night Group

March 3rd: 19 people

March 10th: 15 people

March 17th: 16 people

March 24th: 14 people

March 31st: WORKSHOP

Orientation meeting: 4 new people

April And Beyond

April 15th: WGA presentation at Issachar Center for Urban Leadership

May 7th: Intercessory Prayer meeting, 8:00 am at the WGA offices. Come join us as we pray for the needs of the ministry.

May 19th: Monthly Orientation Meeting required for participation in WGA's Thursday Night Group—invite a friend!

May 28th: Memorial Weekend Picnic—stay tuned for more information.

July 13th: WGA presentation to youth at Rocky Mountain Youth Camp

WGA Staff

Roger Jones
Executive Director

Scott Kingry
Program Director

Mary Heathman
Founding Director

Steve Huston
Chaplain/Church Liaison

Jill Huston
Family & Friends Coordinator

Dianne O'Brian
Asst. Program Director
Beyond Containment

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.

Printed in the USA
Copyright 2016