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A Measure of Grace

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

WGA's Upcoming Move *by Roger Jones*

You may have heard the news about WGA's pending move. It is true! We are planning to move out of our historic offices (known as the Gargoyle House) in early November. We would appreciate your prayers as we prepare for this big event. Here, I want to share with you some of the details WGA's history in the Gargoyle House.

Way back in 1998, WGA was able to make the transition from renting and/or borrowing office space to purchasing a building that would provide offices and room for many WGA events and group meetings. At the time, buying property was a REALLY big deal and a huge step of faith. The ministry was 12 years old, and it felt like the time was right. We did what seemed impossible and raised \$100,000 from our very generous donors for the down payment, which was just over 25% of the purchase price of the Gargoyle House. Then we took on a mortgage that was 3-4 times more than WGA had ever paid in rent.

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Fast forward to today, 18 years later. Much has happened here in these offices. Countless discipleship counseling sessions, many hours of prayer together, a host of parties, various small groups and events have taken place in this three-story building. And we have done so much work, repair, and maintenance. We thought we knew what we were in for when we purchased a 100+ year old building, but to be honest, it was overwhelming a times.

The biggest project was a joint undertaking with Historic Denver and the Colorado Historic Society. The Gargoyle House is a part of the Colorado Historic Registry, so we were able to access a sizeable grant to do some repairs, primarily involving the roof and replacing the exterior stairs at the rear of the building. This took almost two years to complete, almost driving me insane. Fortunately, I am still sane and the building is updated and restored to some of its original splendor.

The next big project was our kitchen remodel. The finished product looks amazing! Mary managed the project, and she did a fantastic job with it. If you've been to an event here in the last few years, I'm sure you have enjoyed the beautiful kitchen. It really transformed the whole 3rd floor of our building, making it feel more like home. We will definitely miss this space once we move.

Our new office building is quite a bit smaller than the Gargoyle House. We have been blessed with an extravagant amount of space during our time here, with very large offices and lots of storage. The entire third floor has been primarily used for events. Our new building

has just over half the square footage, but the space is configured more economically. Our offices will be a little smaller, the kitchen is quite a bit smaller, and some of our events will need to be held elsewhere. But, these trade-offs are worth the benefits.

The biggest benefit of this move is that we will be mortgage free. This alone will reduce our annual expenses by about \$30,000. In addition, our utilities will cost less and a number of other expenses will be reduced as well. We are thankful that God has provided for WGA in such a way that will allow us to make this move. Stay tuned to the newsletter and watch for more info about our new offices. We will post some pictures and host an open house so people can come by for a visit.

Will you pray with us? As you can imagine, there are a lot of details that have to come together when buying and selling property. Closing dates sometimes change and unforeseen roadblocks can appear. We'd like to close on both properties and move in a timely manner. Moving day is currently set for November 5th. This could change of course! In addition to this move, we are still continuing to pursue all our usual ministry activities. We need strength and stamina!

Thanks for your support of WGA! Please let us know if you have any questions about all of this or would like to be part of the up-coming move.





What is Grace? *by Mary Heathman*

(This article from Mary first appeared in August 2002.)

“I understand the 100% truth you guys hold to; I’ve been haunted and tormented by it all my life. But what is this ‘grace’ stuff? I don’t get it!” This question could be attributed to dozens of men and women who have come through WGA, believers and unbelievers alike.

The words “haunted and tormented” illustrate a common false belief about God’s standards. It shows a seriously skewed perspective of “truth”—as if it were something to dispossess us instead of to bless and benefit us. But for the purposes of this article, we will ignore that portion and zero in on the “what is grace?” piece.

It has been my personal experience and observation of the lives of others over the past thirty years of ministry that at some point in our spiritual journey, if we are to grow up into the fullness of Christ, all of us must come to terms with the whole Gospel. Our hearts and minds must be gripped with the powerful, uncompromising grace of God as well as His law. As for me, I came up against this issue in the first few years after I opened my heart to Christ.

At the time, I was active in my church (youth sponsor, as I recall), but also

living with what sometimes bordered on chaos in my family life. My second marriage was already showing severe strain. Overwhelmed with parenting my own two children, who were traumatized by the blended family I had thrust upon them, I was also feeling desperately inadequate as the stepmom of four boys who resented me deeply. Life often felt like a mountain of challenges I would never climb.

There were bright spots, of course. One Mother’s Day morning, the kids fixed me breakfast in bed. I loved that they had gotten together on their own, and decided to do this for me, and I will always cherish the memory of their delight as they delivered my tray. It was a sweet chorus—four children’s voices all delightfully out of sync, “Happy Mother’s Day!” I smile and tear up thinking of the almost pure joy of that moment.

But, the week before had been particularly hard. The children were at each other’s throats all week; my husband was wrapped up in his own world and unavailable to me or the children. The first flush of my commitment to Christ had recently slid to the back burner, crowded out by the daily grind of my life. My thoughts were often black with resentment. “No one knows the trouble, I’ve seen,” was the chorus arising out of the pit of my own self-pity.

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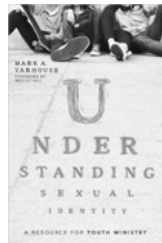
ReSOULutions Series ~ October Resources

By Scott Kingry

In September, Where Grace Abounds began a new program entitled “ReSOULutions: Healing the Wounds in our Souls through Real Solutions”. This is comprised of four (4) week modules that are an introductory series for the main issues that would bring someone to participate at WGA—Addiction (Love, Sex, etc), Sexual Identity & Same Sex Attraction, the Resolution & Healing of Abuse and How to Relate in Healthy Ways.

In October, we began our 4 weeks of exploring “Navigating Sexual Identity and Same Sex Attraction” in which we offer teachings, tools and resources on these subjects. I’ve always appreciated the work of Dr. Mark Yarhouse who founded the Sexual Identity Institute and has published many papers and books, along with helpful Youtube videos. His insight, wisdom and language are always seasoned with grace and sensitivity, while always solidly maintaining biblical truth. I recommend his teachings and here are a few of his books taken off our resource list for October. For more information on the ReSOULutions Se-

ries, please call the Where Grace Abounds Office

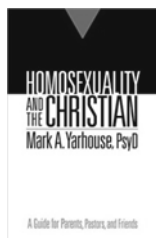


Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry

Today’s youth struggle with difficult questions of sexual identity. Mark Yarhouse, director of the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity, equips youth ministers so they can faithfully navigate the topic of sexual identity in a way that is honest, compassionate, and accessible. Reframing the focus away from the culture wars, Yarhouse introduces readers to the developmental considerations in the formation of sexual identity—all of which occurs in the teen years. He offers practical and helpful ways to think about homosexuality along with suggestions for talking with people who experience same-sex attraction. He also helps parents and youth volunteers learn to graciously respond to children and teens who struggle with questions of sexual identity.

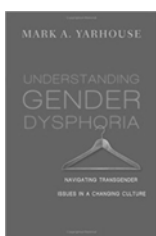
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Homosexuality and the Christian

The Christian conversation on homosexuality is often marked by a lack of humility, compassion, and understanding. When talking about homosexuality, Yarhouse uses a three-tier distinction: attraction, orientation, and identity. One may experience an isolated or occasional attraction to the same sex without having a same-sex orientation. One may have a same-sex orientation, yet choose not to accept a gay identity. Yarhouse argues that neither of these first two tiers is the result of choice. The last tier is where choice comes in. How does one respond to sexual desire? And what, or who, should a Christian place at the center of their identity? Instead of basing an identity upon sexual desire, a Christian's identity is "in Christ."



Understanding Gender Dysphoria

Few topics are more contested today than gender identity. In the fog of the culture war, complex issues like gender dysphoria are reduced to slogans and sound bites. And while the war rages over lan-

guage, institutions and political allegiances, transgender individuals are the ones who end up being the casualties. Mark Yarhouse, an expert in sexual identity and therapy, challenges the church to rise above the political hostilities and listen to people's stories. In *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, Yarhouse offers a Christian perspective on transgender issues that eschews simplistic answers and appreciates the psychological and theological complexity. The result is a book that engages the latest research while remaining pastorally sensitive to the experiences of each person. In the midst of a tense political climate, Yarhouse calls Christians to come alongside those on the margins and stand with them as they resolve their questions and concerns about gender identity.

(Grace continued from page 3)

With this black-heartedness as a backdrop, the beautiful feelings of the Mother's Day breakfast-in-bed treat faded quickly. Downstairs, the kitchen was a mess. We were going to be late for church if we didn't rush. I threw myself into preparations, shouting at anyone who was in my way or seemed to be slowing up the process. By the time we left for church, we were all tense and frustrated. We arrived on time, settled into our seats, and the service began.

But the expected peace eluded me. Instead of my mood lifting with the worship, my thoughts and emotions darkened. Resentment boiled inside of me. I looked around the sanctuary at all the other mothers who didn't have to deal with the complications of my life. They looked smug and self-satisfied to me. I envied them and my heart hardened even more.

To make matters worse, there was to be a celebration of mothers during the service. I gave myself over to poisonous thoughts. As we witnessed the pleasure of the youngest mother going forward for her award, I coveted the newness and freshness of her life. When the oldest mother was honored, I thought to myself, "I hope I don't live that long, I already wish I was dead." When the mother who had traveled the farthest was acknowledged, I began to

judge the ceremony itself. I thought, "This is such a joke. How do they pick people for this anyway? I won't ever be appreciated for my work. If any mother here had to deal with what I have to every day of my life, they would have a psychotic break, but God just expects me to keep on keeping on. God, where are you; why can't I find you today?"

As I accused God of abandoning me, the ceremony was drawing to a close—only one "special" award was yet to be given. "I could scarcely contain my contempt. 'I'm the one who deserves an award, but oh, no. . .'"

The presenter said, "This award is going to a mother who has come to the Lord through the ministry of our preschool. She is the mother of teenagers and a preschooler. She is active in our youth program. She has . . ."

Realization slammed into my thoughts. The muscles in my face and heart felt frozen in place. There wasn't anyone in our church who fit that description—except me!

The contrast of my dark thoughts, attitudes, sinful judgments was stark against the admiration and respect that was being offered me. I could hardly breathe. Filled with shame and conviction, I went forward to receive the award, only because it would have

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(Grace from page 6)

made a scene not to. When I got up to the platform, I steeled myself as I turned around to face the congregation. I fully expected to see my family with their arms crossed in resistance, sneers on their faces, because they knew the “real me.”

But what I saw was a row of children, and my husband, beaming at me right along with the rest of the congregation who didn’t really know me. I was confused. How could they be happy for me when they knew better than anyone that I didn’t deserve it? How could God have inspired the awards committee to give me a motherhood award at the lowest point of my performance as a mother?

“While you are yet a sinner, I died for you.” (I know the tenses aren’t correct in that sentence. But that is how I heard the thought as it came to me.)

I knew the Scripture, “while you were yet sinners, Christ died for you” (Rom. 5:8). It was one of the first I memorized as I began to study the Bible. But it was in that Mother’s Day awards ceremony, that I first I came to *know* the verse. At the height of my arrogance and un-Christ-likeness, an undeserved gift was bestowed upon me. And the power of it changed my heart and mind forever. I relive the power—it sweeps over me—every time I think of it since.

It is the power of grace, of which I speak.

In the next few articles, I would like to

offer some thoughts in response to the question, “What is grace?” I would appreciate your ideas – would love to hear your stories of the moment you first experienced God’s grace. I also want you to pray for me as I think about this topic. I want to do a good job communicating what WGA means when we advocate “100% grace, no compromise,” and I need your prayer support for that.

**Happy are they
who know that
Discipleship
simply means
the life which
springs from
grace, and that
grace simply
means
discipleship.**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer



September In Review

September 24th: WGA Open House.

September 29th: WGA Thursday Night Seminar—Family and Friends Theme

Thursday Night Group

September 1st: 24 people

September 8th: 20 people

September 15th: 17 people

September 22nd: 20 people

September 29th: 20 people

Orientation meeting: 5 new people

October And Beyond

October 16th: WGA participating in the Cherry Creek Presbyterian missions event

October 16th: WGA participating in the Denver Friends Church missions event

October 21st: Training for pastors about addressing sexual issues in the Church

October 22nd: WGA Leadership retreat

November 4th: Intercessory Prayer meeting, 8:00 am at the WGA offices. Come join us as we pray for the needs of the ministry

November 12th: Family and Friends Gathering

January 27–28th: WGA Seminar at Denver Friends Church

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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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