



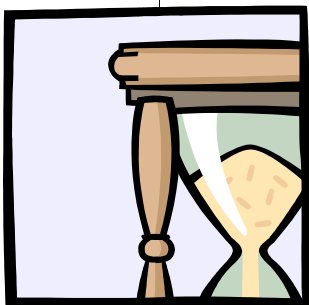
# A Measure of Grace

September 2004  
Volume 8, Issue 9

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

## All-Important Timing and Delivery *By Mary Heathman*

**I**n *The Journey Continues*, printed elsewhere in this newsletter, a WGA group member tells his story. I find his experience fascinating because it illustrates a point driven home to me during my years as a youth sponsor: the truth can kill or bring life, depending on the timing and delivery.



When my daughter was a teenager, she came home from school one afternoon distressed over a spat she had with a friend. I don't remember the specifics, but I do remember responding with some words of wisdom and advice which started out with the phrase, "Well, it seems to me, that . . . . ."

Debbie was unimpressed with my advice, though polite

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(... Timing and Delivery *continued from page 1*)  
about it. She went to her room to do her homework, and I was left with an empty feeling. I did really care about what she was dealing with and knew that I hadn't been helpful.

Later that night, Deb came home from Bible Study all excited, saying, "Mom, I told Linda (her youth leader) about my problem with my friend and she said that it seemed to her that . . . . . ." And out of my daughter's mouth came the exact words I had used in our conversation earlier that day!

I said, "Yeah, it seemed like a good idea to me when I said the same thing this afternoon!"

"Huh!" she responded, "it sounded different when Linda said it!"

It seems my advice was wise and sound. But **I** wasn't the one to deliver it; or she needed to hear it when she actually **asked** for advice; or she **needed some time** to sit with the problem before she was ready to work on it.

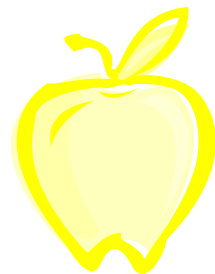
Whatever the reason, it was apparent to me that the timing and delivery of even the most wise truth must be led by the Holy Spirit or it would fall on dead ears. The scripture seems to support this when it tells us that the letter of the law kills, but the spirit of the law gives life, and admonishes us to speak the truth in love, and say only that which will build one an-

other up, like "a word aptly spoken are like apples of gold."

The men and women who come to WGA for help are often fresh from some extremely hurtful experiences. They may have just lost an important relationship, or were turned away when they asked for help, or received bad counsel and suffering the consequences of following that counsel. Most of them aren't asking for advice or counsel when they first come. They just want to be accepted and understood.

In an environment of love and acceptance, without compromising the truth, people begin to heal. And the whole while, God is at work. The testimony offered this month is just such a story of how God worked with one man.

It is fascinating to me that the very truths this man once preached about, then turned away from in anger, are now the same truths that are now drawing him back to his heavenly Father. I hope you will be blessed and encouraged by this man's story, as I have been!



## The Journey Continues

*By a WGA group member*

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It was right after I had shared some of my story with a few WGA leaders that I was asked if I would write an article for the newsletter. I was told that WGA newsletter readers would be interested in my journey. So, that is how I come to be writing about the catalysts of change yet again in my life that have brought me to the point of calling myself a celibate (Christian) homosexual.

I filed for divorce from my wife nearly three years ago out of utter despair and exhaustion. My frustration with the church I pastored, my marital relationship, and my own personal weaknesses were nothing in comparison to the anger and resentment I felt towards both God and the “ex-gay” movement.

I became totally disillusioned with the symbols of healing offered by an



“ex-gay” ministry I attended in my early years. The ministry held up marriage and procreation as

the goal and proof of healing and I bought their message, hook, line and sinker. When the marriage didn’t prove to be the healing I felt I had been promised, I felt betrayed, abandoned by God, ripped off and set-up for failure. I saw no help coming from the Church, and I became completely overwhelmed.

I was so angry with God and everyone else, that I used my divorce as a campaign against both God and His church. The homosexual lifestyle I had abandoned in my twenties I now reclaimed with joy, pride, and reckless abandon.

I went from gay, to “ex-gay,” to re-gay, to now.....celibate gay. There is not enough space in a simple newsletter to tell about all of the reasons I’ve been angry towards God, but suffice it to say that until recently, I seriously doubt there was an angrier being on this planet than myself. After I left my Assembly of God roots, I went to the Episcopal Church. I was even at their General Convention last year in Minneapolis when the church voted in their openly gay (partnered) Bishop, Gene Robinson. I cheered fanatically over the victory, as well as at the “Claiming the Blessing” address, a proposal in favor of gay mar-

*(Continued on page 5)*

# Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks



## Pruning and Plowing

The first time Brad pruned one of our fruit trees I almost cried. I accused him of butchery and despaired of ever seeing another peach on our poor, mutilated stick of a tree. The next spring, however, we had twice the peaches—each the size of my fist. My faith in his tree trimming has grown tremendously over the years. Now, I can almost watch him at his pruning, and after, pat the tree soothingly and assure her that she will be even more beautiful because of it.

I've imagined myself as that tree—occasionally pruned to near nakedness by personal catastrophes. I believe that God not only sees these events, but that His hand is often at the other end of the pruning knife. I want the same faith that I have towards Brad to grow within me towards God. I want to submit as He is about his pruning, trusting that He knows the way that I am made and how to tend me. He purposeth a great crop.

I've also envisioned my internal landscape as a wild mountain meadow where shaggy grasses bow to rain and pristine flowery faces reach for the sun. There is a tranquil rustle of wind through tender leaves. But sudden riotous squalls of life have ripped through my wild meadow—violently slashing the earth, ripping roots from deep underground, churning ugly rocks to the

surface. Perfectly good ground in my soul has been ploughed and rent, left hanging with roots waving nakedly with every passing breeze. American poet, Sara Teasdale, put it thus:

*My soul is a dark ploughed field  
In the cold rain;  
My soul is a broken field  
Ploughed by pain.*

When I experience these dark nights of the soul, I wonder, along with the rest of humanity since the beginning of breath, “where is God? Why does He allow this? Is this simply a result of living in a broken world?” “How will I ever recover?”

I recently received this quote by Samuel Rutherford\* in my email inbox. It has been a sustaining grace through many days in the past few months:

*Why should I tremble at the plough of my Lord, that maketh deep furrows on my soul? I know he is no idle husbandman, he purposeth a crop.*

I want to submit as He is about his plowing, trusting that He knows the way that I am made and how to tend me. He purposeth a great crop.

\* For a short biography of this amazing man go to <http://www.puritansermons.com/ruth/ruth6.htm>



*(Journey... continued from page 3)*

riage and ordination within the Episcopal Church. I was there with my partner!

So after a divorce and re-embracing homosexuality, how, in such a short time, did I go from “gay is okay” to “gay and celibate?” My change in perspective is profound!

What changed my mind? Well, a number of things. Bottom-line...the Holy Spirit. That inner voice that said “Dave...I’m still here. I’m waiting. I’ve called YOU to a higher standard....conforming to scripture as it is written... not re-writing it.”

So what else changed in such a short time? Thoughts! Jesus was counter-culture. What-ever seemed to be trendy and popular during Jesus’ day, was usually heresy, and contra-scripture...but definitely popular for the time.

Jesus wasn’t crucified for being a savior. Jesus was crucified for preaching things like “Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me.” Jesus was crucified for teaching us to “Die to the flesh and live by the Spirit.” Jesus gave up His “rights” as deity and became a laughing stock, ultimately leading us to His father and eternal life.

*“For the message  
of the cross is  
foolishness to  
those who are  
perishing, but to  
us who are being  
saved it is the  
power of God.”  
1 Corinthians  
1:18 Amen.*

I’ve come to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit was the catalyst, and a number of books I’ve read lately were the re-building blocks that I was “divinely” led to. I’ve come to realize that my homosexuality is my “cross.” Regardless of the cause of my same-sex attraction, scripture says what it does, whether I like it or not. (By the way, I don’t like it. I’d much rather be partying and partnered, but...) I’ve read all of the books out on pro-gay theology, where I’m told the Bible is interpreted incorrectly on the verses that deal with homosexuality. Therefore, according to the pro-gay scholars, I have every “right” and every reason to live out my gay life. But nowhere in pro-gay theology does one single proponent mirror Jesus’ words of “laying down my life, being crucified with Christ” or of “dying to myself.” Jesus didn’t

tell the rich young ruler to have his cake and eat it too, he told him to walk away from it all.

Jesus asks us to give up our “rights” and take up our cross. He never promised me a divine conversion into a heterosexual. He promised me redemption, and redemption is a **process**, not a pendant to be worn around my neck naming a pseudo-reality (like heterosexuality).

*(Continued on page 6)*

Finding “Where Grace Abounds” for me has equated to the difference of life and death, in a dramatic capacity. Where else would I go and receive 100% truth and 100% grace at the same time? Especially in an environment where I am safe, accepted *and* challenged to grow? WGA is a true lifeline to me and to others whose struggles are similar. Talk about the Lord making “a way in the desert!”

This entire article would be incomplete if I did not mention several of the most important books I’ve ever read in my entire Christian experience. Foremost is Greg Boyd’s book, “Is God to Blame?...Beyond Pat Answers to Evil and Suffering.” Next are famous authors, Phillip Yanceys’ books “Soul Survivor... How 13 Unlikely Mentors Saved My Faith In the Church,” and “What’s So Amazing About Grace?” Boyds’ book to me is so good that every believer who struggles should read it, and every non-believer should read it so that they can find Christ, perhaps for the first time. Another book I feel compelled to mention is Henri Nouwen’s book “The Inner Voice of Love.” This reads more like a devotional than a traditional book, and in my opinion, is absolutely priceless in bringing peace and strength to this most difficult journey.

The bottom line to me is that Jesus calls us to nonsensical, sacrificial

living. Jesus called Peter out of the boat during a terrible storm to walk on water. One wouldn’t step out of a boat in the middle of the sea under the best of circumstances. Who in their right mind would actually attempt to walk on water? In a *storm*?

Jesus has called me out of the boat, to take his hand and to trust Him. It’s counter-culture....it doesn’t make sense at all. That’s why now more than ever, I’m convinced that it’s right.

As true believers, true “Christians,” Jesus calls each of us away from our families, our friends, our social status, and ultimately our “rights,” and leads each one of us one by one, not only to the foot of the cross, but to the same horrifying nails, the desperate cries to God, and the agonizing death of the flesh he experienced. Those who embrace their rights may live in apparent joy..... here and now. But true followers of Christ are called to experience His un-popularity, his ridicule and torment, and ultimately his death. For he calls us to die...not for the sake of death and the pain that it brings, but so that we may be born into what awaits us on the other side.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:18 Amen.



**PFOX Annual Conference 2004**  
**"Always Our Children ~ No More Tears"**  
**Hampton Inn, Alexandria, Virginia.~ Oct. 8, 9 & 10**

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You, as family of friends of those who are same-sex attracted, have questions, and what better way to get answers than to listen and learn from experts in the field? The conference will also provide you with the time to share with other families who understand how you feel.

Conference Cost: \$99 per person (includes Friday night Snack, Saturday Lunch and Dinner); additional family members only \$75 each. Register by September 23, 2004. For registration form, contact Regina Griggs, PFOX, Box 561, Ft. Belvoir VA 22060 or at [reginagriggs@hotmail.com](mailto:reginagriggs@hotmail.com) , or call WGA at 303-863-7757 and we will be glad to send you one.

**Redeemed Sexuality: What does it look like?**  
**How do we get there?**  
**Friday, October 8, 2004**  
**Colorado Springs, CO**

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This one day seminar will include the following:

- Review healthy sexuality
- Explore developmental needs: spiritual, emotional, physical, relational
- Discuss what works: practical tools for helping others
- Explore the environment for healing: love and grace, connection and encouragement

Who should attend?

- Counselors, pastors and teachers who want to help those facing sexual struggles.
- Parents and friends of people involved in sexual struggles.
- People who want to learn more about homosexuality, pornography, other sexual struggles and God's grace and truth.

Mary Heathman, Executive Director of Where Grace Abounds, will be the presenter. For more information, contact Family Life Services at 719-632-4661. Registration deadline is October 1st. The cost is \$40 per person.

# AUGUST

## Thursday Night Group

August 5th - 51 people  
August 12th - 52 people  
August 19th - 48 people  
August 26th - 46 people  
Orientation meeting - 7 new people

## Discipleship Counseling and Mentoring

The WGA staff provided about 17 hours of discipleship counseling and mentoring each week last month.

August 21st - Dinner Party to introduce WGA to new people

August 21st - WGA social activity—a barbecue at a leadership team member's home

August 28th - Participated in Interaction, an event to connect people with ministries, sponsored by The Next Level Church.

# SEPT & BEYOND

September 26th - WGA participating in Corona Presbyterian's Centennial Celebration.

October 2nd - Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 7:00 - 9:00 am at the WGA offices for prayer.

October 8th - WGA will teaching at "Redeemed Sexuality: What does it look like? How do we get there?" in Colorado Springs. See Page 7 for more details.

October 10th - Service at First Denver friends Church

## WGA Staff

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Executive Director

### Program Department

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Program Director

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Assistant Program Director

### Operations Department

Roger Jones  
Operations Director  
Sheila Knudtsen  
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## Purpose Statement

*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.*



*A Measure of Grace*  
is edited by  
Elodie Ballantine Emig.

Printed in the USA  
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