

*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ~ 1 John 4:18*



## Love Casts Out . . . Insecurity

By Judy Johnston

**D**o you ever question your value and worth as a person? I do, and far more frequently than I care to admit.

During the past few years, God has been trying to show me how extremely valuable I am. Although I want to base my value and worth on what God says, rather than on what other people say or how well I perform or function, it is extremely challenging to change how I've done things for most of my life. I have always been a high achiever, and for as long as I can remember I have based my value on my performance. The old patterns are so deeply ingrained that it is taking a while for His truth to become reality for me.

Many of us successfully portray an image of self-confidence, when in reality we are plagued by fear, self-doubt, and self-hatred. Yes, some of us fit the stereotypical mold of the insecure person but others of us do

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not. In fact, many of us are outwardly high-performance people, while inwardly we are driven by poor self-esteem, hoping we can prove our value by what we achieve.

“We live in an era when personal sense of insecurity has reached near epidemic proportions,” says Dennis Rainey in his book *Building Your Mate's Self-Esteem*. Women in our culture are particularly vulnerable to insecurity as we receive messages from our families, media, and elsewhere that tell us what an ideal woman is, how she looks, and what she can accomplish in a day. But none of us can measure up when comparing ourselves with gods or goddesses.

### A Father's Love

One of the most fundamental areas that impacts our self-esteem is a father's love and affirmation. No father is perfect, but it is God's intention for us to have a strong foundation of love and security through our relationships with our fathers. Obviously, that doesn't always happen. In his book, *Father Hunger*, Robert McGee writes the following:

The love of a father provides emotional and spiritual 'nutrition.' We can learn to do without it. We can substitute other things for it. But we will never feel as healthy as we should, because we haven't been provided with enough of an absolutely necessary ingredient for adequate growth.

My own father was unable to give me the love and acceptance I needed as a child. He is manic-depressive but did not get treated for it until I was in college. Growing up in a home with a mentally unstable father did not give me the kind of security I needed as a growing girl. He was quite self-absorbed, and I was starved for attention. So, in an effort to feel good about myself, I turned to activities and achievements to find value. I am convinced that these issues were instrumental in my struggle to believe that I am valuable as a person just because God created me. This struggle still plays out in my life—I try to find my self-worth in how I'm performing, and if I'm not doing well, I struggle with insecurity and self-hatred.

God has better things for us. When Jesus was baptized by John, before He had “performed” at all—that is, before He started His public ministry—“a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased’” (Matthew 3:17). It wasn't only after Jesus had accomplished what He came to do that the Father was pleased with Him. It was before He even tried! And it is this kind of love and acceptance that motivates, gives vision, and empowers a person to be who God created him or her to be and to do what God created him or her to do. Jesus was empowered by God's love and acceptance from the very beginning of His ministry. I want to be empowered by that kind of love and acceptance. Don't you?

### Value Based on Performance Is Trouble

Today, I am a mother to three children—a six-year old boy and twin boys who will be four this month. Being a mother is the most important job I'll ever have, but the past several years have been some of the most frustrating of my life. If I am basing my self-worth on my performance, I am a failure every day! I know I can't be a perfect mom, but how do I solve the recurring problem of who had the toy first? And why aren't the twins potty trained yet? What can I do to finish a project with two three-year-olds hanging onto both my legs? I want to succeed at something! I want to finish something!

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## Love Casts Out Insecurity

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I know not everyone is a mother, and some who are feel confident in their ability to be good mothers, but we each find ourselves failing in some area daily—whether at work, in friendships, at church, in our support groups, or even in our struggles against insecurity. Each of us has recurring problems we don't know how to solve or goals we haven't achieved. If we continue to base our value on our performance we're in big trouble.

Body image is another area where many women feel insecure. In a society where we are bombarded daily with images of "perfection", it is difficult to accept our own flawed bodies. Who among us has the time to work out three hours a day or the money to afford a personal trainer and chef? If we had this kind of time and money perhaps we could achieve a Halle Berry body; but let's be realistic, there are more important things.

I'm four feet eleven inches tall, so I'll never look like a five foot nine supermodel. It's impossible. Even if we were five foot nine, the way most of our bodies are shaped, we would not look like what we see in the movies. Women were made to have curves! Have you ever looked at sculptures in a museum? This is where my husband, Jeff, convinced me that a woman's body really is beautiful, side-saddles and all. I have always called the few inches below my belly button my pooch. It's not perfectly flat like a model's. It sticks out! When we'd look at sculptures together, Jeff would say, "See Jude, she has a pooch too!" I have come to accept my body the way God made me because I don't have unrealistic ideas about how I should look.

The book of Revelation reads, "You [God] created all things and *by Your will* they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11b, *italics added*). You and I were created because God wanted to make us! That is an amaz-

ing thought to me. In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren states, "God's motive for creating you was His love." In *The Message* paraphrase of the Bible, Ephesians 1:4b reads, "Long before He laid down earth's foundation, He had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of His love." As I continue to bask in the love of the Lord, He whispers His truth to me—that He delights in me, not because of how well I perform but because I'm me. And He delights in you, too, no matter how well you \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank). A new parent does not love her child because of all the great things a baby can do. A baby is loved deeply because she is an incredible miracle . . . a new life . . . a gift from God.

### Overcoming Insecurities

There are three things I've been practicing to overcome my insecurities, and they've been pretty effective when I do them perfectly. Just kidding! I do not do these things perfectly, and neither will you. We don't need to. But if we persevere, we *will* see results.

1) Know God and believe Him. This is something Beth Moore talks about in her *Living Free* workbook. I came to realize that I didn't believe a lot of things God says, particularly those things that pertain to His love for *me*. As I have meditated on the truth of His Word and made the choice to believe it, I have begun to experience more and more freedom. When I realize I just can't seem to believe a specific truth, I seek healing prayer. Sometimes a person has so much wounding that he or she can't grasp the love of God. God longs for you to know how much He loves you, and He will be relentless in His pursuit of you.

2) Be honest about your insecurities. It's actually quite freeing to admit it! For me, it has also helped to know that most people struggle with insecurity at some time or another. I'm not suggesting that you spill out all your insecurities in a job interview, but choose a few safe people with whom to share honestly and ask them to pray for you. The first step to solving a problem is admitting there is a problem.

3) Surround yourself with people who build you up. If you are around sarcastic, angry people, chances are you leave them feeling beat up rather than built up. Hang out with people who love you and affirm who you are. God knows you need this! In 1 Corinthians 14:3, Paul writes, "But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort." God wouldn't have gifted people to be encouragers if the people who make up the body of Christ (you and I) weren't in need of encouragement and comfort.

"God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all the things he made" (James 1:18, *The Message*). As that truth penetrates our hearts, we are changed. We are significant to God. He created us for his good pleasure. May God move that truth from our heads to our hearts so we can live in His grace, love . . . and security. ■

### — Please Pray With Us . . . —

**Thanksgiving**—In April, Exodus ministries from the Mid-Atlantic region gathered for their annual regional conference. Featuring speakers, Chris and Dorothy Greco, the conference was an incredible event. Many Regeneration participants from Northern Virginia and Baltimore attended the conference and were deeply touched. Thank you for your prayers for this event!

**Petitions**—As you can see, much of this newsletter is devoted to issues pertaining in a special way to women. Please pray for our women's ministries. Particularly, please pray for Karen Woollen (Baltimore Women's Ministry Director) and for Melissa Coffey (NoVA Ministry Associate) as they seek to raise up leaders and further Regeneration's effectiveness in reaching out to women struggling with sexual brokenness.

Please also pray for our book director's daughter KC who left last month for a year of missions work in Haiti.

## Personal Testimony and Involvement with Regeneration

By Melissa A. Coffey, Ministry Associate (see p. 4, *Regeneration NoVA Is Growing!*)

I grew up in a devout, Catholic family, but I did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. My father was absent and my mother worked all the time to support me, my sister, and my brother. Beginning in high school and continuing through college, I was involved in several long-term, sexual relationships with men. Reflecting on those relationships, I can see that I was looking for affirmation and a sense of identity and worth that I had never received from my father.

Through various circumstances during my junior year of college, I began questioning my sexuality. After a year of confusion and searching, I entered a lesbian relationship. Although the relationship lasted only a short time, it was emotionally intense and I was devastated when it ended. However, in the midst of that relationship I began questioning my relationship with God and searching for something deeper. I had attended Mass every Sunday and was quite involved with the Catholic student center on campus. I felt conflicted because I knew that my lesbian relationship was “wrong,” and yet I felt that I had finally found what I was looking for—to be loved and cared for, and to be understood as a woman.

About two months after the lesbian relationship ended, my sister invited me to attend Urbana, a missions conference held every three years by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Of course, at this point, I thought I was a lesbian, but God was drawing me to Himself. I said that I would go, and in a workshop on sexual wholeness led by Mario Bergner, I gave my life to Christ and repented of my lesbian relationship. During that workshop the veil was lifted from my eyes, and I saw how I had been deceived into thinking that lesbianism was God’s best for me. That day was the first step in my journey into sexual and relational wholeness.

After Urbana, I went back for my last semester in college and got involved with InterVarsity there. That spring, in a week-long series of outreach events to the campus, I heard Bob Ragan speak about Regeneration Ministries and coming out of homosexuality. I had not shared my lesbian struggle with anyone at that point, and I remember thinking to myself that it would probably be helpful to get involved with Regeneration. Unfortunately, the timing didn’t work out, and it was two years before I could join the Living Waters (LW) program.

When I joined LW in 1999, I found a place where I could be real about my struggles and my brokenness, and I began to understand the role my family had played. I also gained a great deal of insight into why I related to people in such broken ways. LW changed my life. I grew more spiritually in those six months than in the entire time I had

been a Christian. It was amazing. I took a break from the program the next year, but in that time, God began to open doors for me to share my testimony and the work that He had accomplished through LW. And in that year, God began to birth a desire in me to help others in the healing process. In the fall of 2000, I went through LW again as a participant, and in the 2001 and 2002 seasons I was a small group leader. I led a drop-in group for women in the summer of 2003.

It is difficult to put into words how deeply I feel called by God to partner with Him and Regeneration in reaching the sexually and relationally broken for Christ. I believe that God has equipped me with skills, gifts, and experience to help Regeneration expand its influence and impact in the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia.

Genesis 1:27 says that “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” There is a display of God’s image and glory that comes when men and women work together in His Kingdom to speak and minister His truth. This is what ministry to the sexually and relationally broken is all about—restoring men and women to be who God designed them to be. Working with Bob will provide an opportunity to model a balance of the masculine and feminine partnering together to foster God’s healing and wholeness.

Currently, I am pursuing a Master’s degree in Community Counseling, which is the first step in obtaining licensure as a professional counselor. Through the coursework and practical experience, I am learning skills that will enable me to provide Biblically-based counseling with a solid clinical foundation. This is a new, but very necessary service that Regeneration can provide.

In addition, Bob and I have talked several times about the vision he has for reaching those struggling with same-sex attraction and other issues of sexual and relational brokenness specifically in Washington, D.C.

Regeneration offers truth, compassion and a message of freedom and wholeness at a time when society is promoting false models of sexuality. I am excited about helping Regeneration reach those who are struggling with sexual and relational brokenness to find their identity in Christ. ■

# Ministry News

## Regeneration 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference November 6, 2004

Twenty-five years ago, Alan Medinger began a small and obscure ministry for men and women struggling with unwanted homosexuality. In large part, churches didn't want to touch this issue, or they didn't know how. But God did.

Today, He is knocking on church doors, bringing His ministry to the sexually broken back to their doorsteps. On November 6<sup>th</sup>, will you open the door?

*The Church - God's Army, God's Hospital  
Regeneration's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Conference & Banquet, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004  
Baltimore, Maryland  
Featuring national speaker and author Joe Dallas*

## Living Waters Begins September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>

Living Waters is for men and women dealing with homosexuality, sexual addiction, sexual abuse and other sexual and relational brokenness issues. Through healing prayer and biblical teachings, Living Waters enables participants to move towards purity and relational wholeness. The program begins on Thursday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> in Baltimore and Thursday, September 30<sup>th</sup> in Northern Virginia. Applications are already being accepted in both offices and space is limited, so act now! To learn more or to apply, call 410-661-0284 (ext. 4) in Baltimore or 703-591-4673 in Northern Virginia.

## Regeneration NoVA Is Growing!

We are thrilled to announce the addition of Melissa Coffey to Regeneration's Northern Virginia staff. As Ministry Associate, Melissa will work alongside Bob Ragan developing the overall ministry of the Northern Virginia office. You can read more about Melissa and her involvement with Regeneration on page 3 of this newsletter, and we invite you to join with us in welcoming her and praying for her.

## Annual Exodus Conference Is Here!

The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Exodus *Freedom* Conference: *A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION* is July 20<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> at Azusa Pacific University in Southern California. For more information, visit Exodus on-line at [www.exodus-international.org](http://www.exodus-international.org).

# Financial News

Early on, we decided that the main portion of *Regeneration News* would consist of a teaching article offering insights and encouragement for men and women battling against sexual sin. Today, we send these teachings around the world, even to places where ministries are scarce—like prisons, third world countries, or perhaps where you or someone you love lives.

Interestingly, out of the 3,600 newsletters we send, only 150 *Regeneration News* recipients—that's 4% of our readership—contribute financially to Regeneration each month. We've known this for a long time, and we remain committed to providing this newsletter free of charge to anyone who requests it. Still, we can't help but think what a difference it could make if the number of readers who contributed on a monthly basis rose to 5% (180 readers monthly) or 10% (360 readers), or higher! With this in mind, won't you join our monthly support team today?

## Regeneration Is...

### Baltimore Office

**Jeff Johnston**  
Executive Director  
**Alan Medinger**  
Board President  
**Lani Bersch**  
Director of  
Regeneration Books

**Karen Woollen**  
Baltimore Women's  
Ministry Director &  
Office Manager

**Joshua Glaser**  
Baltimore Director

**Laura Suffecool**  
Accountant

**Marcia Schuett**  
Office Assistant

### Northern Virginia Office

**Bob Ragan**  
Northern Virginia  
Director

**Melissa Coffey**  
Ministry Associate

**Rose Marshall**  
NoVA Office Manager

### Group Meetings

#### Baltimore, MD

- Living Waters
- New Beginnings
- Women's Group
- Wives' Group
- Monday Noon Group

#### Northern, VA

- Living Waters
- Women's Group
- Wives' Group
- Men's Group
- Parents' Group
- s.a.l.t. (Sexual Addiction Group)

#### Washington, D.C.

- Men's Drop-In Group

### Regeneration Books

Regeneration Books is the major distributor of books addressing homosexuality and related subjects from a Christian perspective. To receive a free catalog call us at (410) 661-0284 or visit us online at [www.regenbooks.org](http://www.regenbooks.org).