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“He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom . . .”
~ Isaiah 40:11



Emotional Longing in Men

By Alan Medinger

We have long recognized that the homosexual drive is not, at its root, sexual. The drive gains its direction and power from certain things inside a person, in many cases unmet needs or fears. Not always, but most often, in men it is an unmet need or a deficit, and in women, it is a fear.

This article will deal solely with male homosexuality because I am going to discuss an unmet need that comes out of a deficit in a boy's relationship with his father. To be clear, women dealing with same-sex attractions (SSA) can have father deficits too, and so true healing for them

may at some point require them to see men as protectors (a fatherly role). But the dynamics of these father deficits are quite different, so I will focus on men with SSA.

The two most frequently seen non-sexual—that is non-erotic—roots of male homosexuality are 1) a longing for manhood (one's own), and 2) a longing to connect with manhood (someone else's). In most boys, their own manhood develops in the normal process of growing up; identification with the father, inclusion in the world of boys, and finally reaching outside of themselves to one who is “other,” to a woman.

In most boys the connection with someone else's manhood is taken care of through early experiences with a loving and affirming father. With most SSA men, however, this connection was not made. Then, as often happens when a legitimate need is not met, the longing for it grows stronger and stronger. It becomes a craving for those things that early connection with the father should bring—security and affirmation. And, as is characteristic of males, the longing becomes sexualized. At first, the boy may imagine his needs being met in a physical way (like a strong man befriending him or a brave man rescuing him), but eventually, the pictures

develop sexual overtones. The craving for an intense connection with a man becomes a desire for a sexual relationship with a man.

What I am talking about here is not just identifying a psychological need, but accessing a deep emotional longing. These longings of the heart must be addressed because true and deep healing can only come as we uncover the pain of the past and experience where it remains present with us today. Using a specific example, this is what I will address in this article.

The Place of the Symbolic

Symbols are tremendously important here. If we can't understand the presence and power of symbols, there is much we don't understand about life. This is particularly true with respect to human sexuality. In what follows I am going to deal with one specific symbol that is significant to many SSA men. If readers cannot identify with the symbol addressed here, perhaps another one could be substituted.

What are the symbols of manhood? The most obvious one would be male genitals, but there are many others: physical strength, height, a deep voice, a hairy body. There is one, however, that people who have not dealt with same-sex attractions might never guess, but it is one that I run into over and over again. A man in our ministry tells me, “I fell into masturbation last night after I started surfing the TV looking for chests”. Another says, “I'm not really after sex. If I could only lay my head on some strong man's chest . . .” The men in our groups complain about how difficult it is when spring arrives and construction workers start taking off their shirts.

This may seem strange to some, but when you think about it, a man's chest is a logical symbol of manhood. The symbols of manhood are those characteristics of men that make them different from women. (See the “Otherness” article in our July-August newsletter). A man's size, muscles, hairy body—and chest—all

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distinguish him from women. And the chest, in more than just a physical or figurative way, is at the center of a man. In our culture, the core of a man is his heart—located in his chest. Typically, the chest is big, thick and solid; it often connotes strength.

An old command to military recruits was “chin up, shoulders back, chest out.” This up-front chest declared manhood.

It can greatly help the man struggling with SSA, or those trying to help him, to recognize, not just the sexual attraction that draws him, but also the deep emotional longing—the ache—that lies at the root of his attraction to men. The longing for intimacy is why he might picture being satisfied by laying his head on or touching the bare chest of a man.

I think that this kind of longing for intimacy is natural in a little boy, and usually it is met in the normal physical contacts of a father and son. My son demonstrated this quite clearly. When he was first able to crawl out of his crib, sometimes on Saturday mornings, when my wife and I were sleeping in, he would come get in our bed. He would unbutton my pajama top, then pull his little pajama top up, and lay on my chest, bare skin to bare skin. Steve grew up with quite a healthy male identity, and this expressed his little boy’s desire to connect with his father.

Now picture the adult man with a deep unmet need for the security and affirmation that could come from a father; what could seem more comforting than imagining his face resting on the strong, warm chest of a man, the man’s strong arms wrapped around him?

Filling the Empty Place

For the adult SSA man, however, filling the empty place in his heart through such contact today is probably not possible. First, if physically intimate male contacts were healing, then all active homosexual men would outgrow their homosexuality and be healed. To the contrary, these longings of men in the gay life continue or get worse. Even in a Christian setting, if one were to find a man who had the heart to minister to the SSA man in a physical way such as this—which is extremely unlikely—the struggler could perpetuate his self-image of being a little boy.

Still, healing from homosexuality requires that we address the aching heart. Unfortunately, it is likely that for most, the ache will never go away totally, but there are actions we can do to diminish it. Here are some suggestions:

1. Grieve the loss—with Jesus. Fully acknowledge the pain of never having experienced the loving physical intimacy of a father. Let the pain of that reality come to the surface. Bring it to the Lord; talk to Him about it. Let Him minister to you in the loss.

2. Let Jesus minister to you physically. I have become convinced that no mere man can fill the deep needs that are in the man who has spent years longing for a certain type of male love and intimacy. The void is too great. But there is One who can meet these needs. In my early years as a Christian, Jesus would allow me to be intimate with Him in my quiet times in ways that clearly filled the empty places in me. I could imagine that He was my older friend or brother, and after a long day of hiking, we would sit down by a rock and I would rest my head on His chest. I worried that this would turn erotic, but I sensed Him saying, “Don’t worry about it if it does,” and it never did. As He met the deep needs and filled the empty places, the longing diminished, and after a time, my need for male relationships became

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“His father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.” Lk 15:20

Please Pray With Us . . .

Thanksgiving – Join us in thanking God for:

- A successful ministry banquet in Baltimore on November 4th.
- Another year of being able to minister Christ’s healing love to hundreds of men and women caught in sexual sin.
- Sending His Son as a little baby boy, who would carry our burdens and save us from our sin.

Petitions – Join us in praying for:

- The many men and women in our ministry who come from broken families as they move through the holiday season—a season usually focused on family gatherings.
- A full replenishment of the \$25,000 reserve fund used to pay staff salaries in financially lean months.
- The future of Regeneration’s ministry.

* For more information or in-depth monthly prayer requests,
E-mail josh@RegenerationMinistries.org.

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as healthy and normal as anyone's.

I am not sure that the Lord will work this way in every SSA man's heart, but do grieve the loss, go to Him, and He will minister to you in some way.

3. Desexualize the need. Hopefully, reading this article has already started the process. Ask the Lord to help you identify the specific longings that might be driving you—security, male intimacy, being valued by a man, physical touch, whatever—and whenever such needs are felt, say to yourself and the Lord, “It really isn't sex I want; what I really want is . . . (whatever needs you have identified). Ask the Lord to meet that need at that moment. Over time the link between the felt need and sexual desire will diminish.

4. Repent of any idolatry. If a man's chest, or any part of a man's body has become so important to you that you think you may be falling into idolatry, repent of the specific sin of idolatry, and every time you find yourself going there again, picture yourself smashing the idol and turning to the one true God.

5. Accept the fact that the need may never be fully met in this life. However, when acknowledging this, put the problem in the perspective of your total life. Seek to avoid self-pity and seek to develop a grateful heart. Every man goes through life missing out on some things. But for the believer, God has given each of us so much.

6. Become a father. I say this a bit facetiously—of course fatherhood is not possible or practical for every man—but for those men who have started to receive from the Father, those who have begun to really experience some significant healing and growth in the area of their own manhood, when these men become fathers, there is a way in which, as they pour out love and intimacy to their little sons or daughters, God pours into them the same thing. When that happens, our sense of our self moves further from that of a needy little boy to that of a life-giving man.

7. Watch healthy fathers. If fatherhood isn't realistic for you, let me suggest something else. Tom and his wife and young son and daughter are often a few rows in front of me in church. Tom and his children are very physical. The kids are constantly snuggling up to Tom or touching his face. He puts his arms around them or strokes their heads—all in a very natural and unobtrusive way. Whenever I see this, my heart warms, and I feel joy for this family.

Witnessing such an interaction will likely stir up longings in you, and when the feelings arise, go to the Lord with your longings, seeking to lay them down before Him. With your eyes turned from yourself, start praising God for the blessings that these children are receiving. This is not to say you should

Dear Men: Step Back onto the Field

I am writing to invite you to join a group of men who are exploring the world of sports. WAIT!!! Some of you are already getting ready to move on to your next piece of mail, but please read on. Last month, this newsletter announced an opportunity for men to play softball together as a way of facing what for many of us was a painful part of growing up—sports. Only men associated with Regeneration are invited, and only those who are seeking to grow in their manhood with the help of the Lord and brothers in Christ.

Twice in October, a group of men played softball together. In November, it was football. More opportunities are coming. These men know that for many of us the idea of sports brings back painful memories of failure, name-calling or other kinds of abuse. As children, these painful experiences were the reason we left the sports field and never looked back. But what we didn't know (and how could we?) is that when we left the field, we left a piece of ourselves, we left an opportunity to develop more fully into our manhood. The opportunity is still there, and we're inviting you to it.

One man who came out for softball reported that after all these years of avoiding it, he's now discovered that he's actually good at softball! How do you think that is changing his perception of himself as a man?

Join us. This is a great opportunity to face and overcome some longstanding fears and to experience some healthy fellowship with other men on the journey into manhood with Christ. Please prayerfully consider coming out to practice and to play! All skill levels are welcome! Contact the Regeneration office in Baltimore (410-661-0284 or RegenBalto@RegenerationMinistries.org) for more information.

stuff the ache you feel, but as you bless God for what these children are receiving that you did not receive, you may find a new freedom to receive the intimate love of your heavenly Father.

God does not leave any of us alone in our pain. He has promised to be father to the fatherless. Let Him do that. Let Him start to fill the empty places in you. ■

Ministry News

Newsletter Changes for 2006!

Keep an eye out for our new newsletter format, slated to begin next month! The new format will expand the breadth of the newsletter's "ministry" by continuing to provide teaching articles, while also including testimonies, book reviews, and other helpful resources for those dealing with sexual sin problems. The new format will also include an additional section to inform ministry partners of ministry activities, to update ministry friends on the lives and work of staff and leaders, and to notify readers of upcoming ministry events with Regeneration and other nearby ministries. Watch your mailbox in the New Year!



***May this Christmas
lead you ever
closer to Jesus.
Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year!
From Regeneration***

Financial News

We want to share four important pieces of financial news with you this month:

1. You can now give to Regeneration with monthly Automatic Monthly Giving. We invite you to take advantage of this easy way to give, which benefits the ministry tremendously! See the enclosed card for more details.
2. The ministry has not fully recovered from the financial shortfall experienced last summer; salaries and the salary reserve fund still need replenishing.
3. The November 4th Baltimore Banquet saw exponential growth in giving, prayer pledges, and newcomer attendance this year.
4. **Your year-end gift is greatly appreciated at this time. Please pray about giving generously.**

God bless you!

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Regeneration Books

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