

*However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.*  
~ Acts 20:24



## When Is Recovery Over?

By Alan Medinger

Several years ago a healing conference was being held in a nearby state, and most of the Regeneration staff planned to attend. When a staff member asked if I was going to be there, I replied, “No, I don’t need healing.” Admittedly, I was being a bit facetious. I knew that my response appeared somewhat arrogant—carrying the implication that I believed I was totally healed. But in fact, there was some truth in what I said.

Of course, I was not, and am not, totally healed. But of all the things I needed to pursue with the Lord at

that time, my healing was not at the top of the list. My perspective was that it was somewhere below repenting of certain heart attitudes, breaking a few bad habits, and continuing to grow in Christian manhood. Healing was and is important, but it isn’t everything.

Over the years, Exodus ministries have begun strongly cautioning those who leave

homosexuality to avoid taking on an “ex-gay” identity. Several years ago, our ministries became aware of a regular problem in which people coming through our ministries who had once let homosexuality define them were now letting *ex-gay* define them. When they were defined by homosexuality, it influenced the way they thought of themselves, who they spent time with, how they behaved, and many other factors of their lives. Similarly, once they’d found some freedom from their old ways, defining themselves as ex-gay also influenced how they thought of themselves, who they spent time

with, and many other factors. For many, the ex-gay world was comfortable and non-threatening, so they let that become their stopping place, rather than moving on into the broader world of healthy men and women. They were content to be Christians who no longer acted out homosexually, but they were still not fully becoming the men and women God called them to be.

Likewise, being in “recovery” can have some of the same pitfalls as taking on an ex-gay identity. Few of our people regularly refer to themselves as “recovering homosexuals” or even “recovering sex addicts,” but there are those who have found considerable freedom from sexual sin who then still center their lives around their problem. Some have been in recovery for so long that they can’t picture themselves as people who have really put homosexuality or sex addiction behind them.

I believe that for most of us the time does come when we need to let go of a “recovery” mindset. And when we do, we are apt to find ourselves much more free to start becoming the men and women God calls us to be.

Before I explain reasoning behind this, let me comment on Recovery as it is used in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and all of the 12-Step programs modeled after AA. It is from the 12-step programs that we get the idea of continually being “in recovery.”

### We Differ from the AA Model

First off, it would be terribly arrogant to claim I know better than AA how to overcome addictions. Particularly in the area of chemical addictions, no program comes close to the 12-step programs in setting people free. Even the most sophisticated clinical programs rely on the 12-step approach. And in our ministry we recognize that with the release of pleasure-inducing chemicals in the

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**Some of our greatest healing will come when we have left healing behind. Our greatest growth may take place when we realize that God does not heal us of immaturity.**

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brain that come with sexual stimulation, our addictions are not entirely different from those of an alcohol or drug addict.

But let me offer several reasons why “recovery” as we see it in the 12-step programs may not necessarily be helpful for the people to whom we minister.

1. Although many 12-step people see themselves as always in recovery, AA does not present a categorical view that people do not recover. In *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, the companion book to AA’s “Big Book,” a footnote declares, “In 1976 it is estimated that more than 1,000,000 have recovered through AA.”

2. Always being an alcoholic has meaning and is helpful, because most alcoholics can *never* take another alcoholic drink. This is consistent with their “disease” approach to their affliction. We do not believe in a medical approach to homosexuality, and although it may be wise to consider that we may always be vulnerable in certain areas, we do see God bringing us out of homosexuality.

3. Giving up the identity is essential to our healing, whereas standing up at a meeting and saying, “My name is Alan, and I am a homosexual” would not only be unhelpful, it would not be true. A person may have a homosexual problem, but “homosexual” doesn’t define who he or she is.

Recovery can become a way of life, guiding us into relationships with certain types of people, placing us permanently in therapeutic programs, even providing its own language. (For a sympathetic and gentle parody of this, rent the movie, “Stuart Saves His Family.” Stuart belongs to a half dozen 12-step programs and the gatherings of his various “sponsors” whenever he has slipped is hilarious to anyone who has ever been in the world of recovery.) At first, this change in our “way of life” is important, perhaps even essential. But there comes a time when this must change.

Let me explain this further. There are areas in our lives where we will never be totally healed in this life. We cannot expect to be totally healed of everything just as we cannot expect to be totally sinless in this life. But, just as we will never experience the richness and fullness of the Christian life if we stay forever focused on our sins, we cannot get on with our lives if we are forever in recovery.

## Recovery and Sanctification

As we walk with the Lord, we are continually changing. We never “arrive.” But I believe—and this is the key point I want to make here—*over time our recovery (from homosexuality or sex-addiction) should merge with the process of sanctification or renewing the inner man, a process that is essential for all Christian believers.* In simple terms, our focus shifts from dealing with our addictions to becoming more Christ-like.

There are a number of reasons why we should pursue this change in mindset. Being in recovery may be essential for a time, but it has its negative sides:

1. It encourages narcissism. It can be perpetually *me* centered; *my* weaknesses, *my* woundedness, *my* emotional wellbeing, *my* purity, all become too much the focal point of our lives.

2. The programs, the conferences, the counseling can become the center of our lives to the point at which they become addictions themselves. This may not be terrible, but one has to wonder if there isn’t a broader world out there that God would have us experience.

3. Recovery may be used as a means of avoiding the difficult process of growing up. God wants to take us beyond recovery, and that means our moving out into the broader world of men and women, a world of healthy relationships and true intimacy. We can have life-giving relationships and real intimacy with other overcomers, but to limit our relationships to such “comfortable” people can put our healing and growth on hold.

Some of our greatest healing will come when we have left healing behind. Our greatest growth may take place when we realize that God does not heal us of immaturity.

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Okay, when do we put recovery behind us? Sorry, but there is no timetable. For one person it might be six months, for another six years. The important thing is that at some point moving beyond recovery should be one of our primary goals.

### Moving On

In moving from recovery to broader sanctification, we are moving into the mainstream of the Body of Christ. We are moving from being patients to becoming disciples and that is a good thing.

Right now, some may clearly belong in recovery. Those who are acting out sexually, regularly using pornography, chronically masturbating, need to make overcoming these sins a major focus in their lives. They need the help of a group or a counselor, or they need specific accountability relationships. It is unlikely they will overcome these problems without some kind of help from other Christians. They need to pursue all that God is offering through His body to bring them to wholeness. But God does heal and change us, so we should not expect pursuit of recovery through these means to be a lifelong project.

Generally, freedom from sexual, relational and identity problems doesn't mean that some weaknesses and vulnerabilities won't remain. We need to acknowledge and deal with our vulnerabilities appropriately, but we don't have to let them be the guiding factor in our lives. We may decide that there are places we should never go, or things we should never watch. I made a decision early in my walk with the Lord that I would never join a gym. But such restrictions don't have to be a major issue in our lives. We must not believe the lie that living with such restrictions means we have not recovered. Paul himself said, "All things are permissible for me, but not all things are beneficial" (1 Corinthians 6:12).

An occasional slip into lust is not proof that we need to continue to keep the pursuit of sexual purity as the major focus of our spiritual lives. God may have more important things for us to attend to. We all recognize this truth in other areas of our lives, don't we? For example, when God convicts us that we have just harshly

judged someone, we typically don't take that as a sign that we need to put everything else on hold while we become less judgmental. We acknowledge our sin, confess it, and move on. Let's face it, every one of us has numerous areas in which we need to grow and change, and God's Word has not told us that sexual issues always belong at the top of the list.

For those of us who struggle homosexually this also means that though we may still feel some sexual attractions to people of the same sex, we are not therefore supposed to stay in recovery. For many, such attractions eventually become nothing but a mere nuisance.

**"But seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."**  
**Matthew 6:33**

One of the greatest problems with sexual sin is that it is a distraction. It can so readily turn our attention from everything else God wants to do in and through us. We need to let our striving for sexual purity stay in proper proportion to other ways that God wants to work in us to make us more like His Son.

On the other hand, putting recovery behind us should not be a selfish act, one that leads us to so withdraw from that world of sexual struggles that we are unwilling to obey God when he call us "to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" ( 2 Corinthians 4).

The Twelfth Step of AA (the need to carry the message to others) is valid for all of us. We need to minister to others. And in one of those great paradoxes of the Christian life, the more we minister effectively to those who struggle in the areas where we have struggled, the more our eyes are opened to what God has done in us.

Seeing this, and out of the grateful heart that comes with this realization, we will move even further along beyond recovery. ■

## Ministry News

### Financial News

As we move through this month, we will be prayerfully planning our budgets for fiscal year 2007, which includes thinking carefully about the Lord's direction for us in the next 12 months. Please pray for us in this process. Those of you in Christian ministry are aware that it can be a challenge to balance both bold faith and responsible stewardship in ministry budgeting.

As we move into the fall season of ministry, your generous gift now will help those just beginning their journey out of the bondage of sexual sin and brokenness. Thank you so much!

### Coordinator of NoVA Men's Ministry

We're currently seeking a Coordinator of NoVA Men's Ministry. Qualified applicants must possess a mature relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, a compassionate and expressed understanding of sexual and relational brokenness, and evidence of ongoing, personal integrity in their walk.

Preferred candidates have experience with the Living Waters and/or SALT programs and leading/teaching small groups. Please contact Bob Ragan at 703-591-4673 for more information.

## Please Pray With Us . . .

**Petitions** – Please pray for Jay Wilson and his wife, Ruth, and their three children as they move to Baltimore from Virginia Beach to work with the ministry. Also, please pray we will find God's person for the job to join us in our Northern Virginia office.

Please pray for Melissa Coffey as she transitions from our staff to move to New York state to venture into the next phase of her life.

Also, please pray for us as we move into a new ministry year, beginning three programs and conducting several trainings this month. Thank you!

**Thanksgiving** – We thank God for Melissa Coffey and the wonderful blessing she has been to our staff in the past three years. Melissa brought a level of professionalism, intuition and clarity to her work with women that has truly carried us further in the work we do. While we will sorely miss her, we are excited to see what the Lord has for her as she moves on.

We also heartily thank the Father for the many new people He is bringing to join with us in the work we do.

For more information or in-depth monthly prayer requests,  
E-mail [josh@RegenerationMinistries.org](mailto:josh@RegenerationMinistries.org).

## Regeneration Is...

### Baltimore Office

**Joshua Glaser**  
Executive Director

**Alan Medinger**  
Executive Director Emeritus

**Laura Suffecool**  
Accounting Manager

### Northern Virginia Office

**Bob Ragan**  
Northern Virginia  
Director

**Melissa Coffey**  
Northern Virginia  
Assistant Director

### Group Meetings

#### Baltimore, MD

- Living Waters
- New Beginnings (Sexual Addiction Group)
- New Directions
- Growth Into Manhood
- Wives' Group

#### Northern, VA

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