

November 2006

*However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" -- but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.
~ I Corinthians 2:9-10*



NEWS
Regeneration
www.RegenerationMinistries.org

Putting Sex in its Proper Place

by Alan Medinger

Rarely does anyone solve his or her problems with sexual sin by a purely rational approach. Saying to one's self, "That's sinful and stupid so I won't do it anymore" seldom works. Most Christians who repeatedly engage in sexual sin know that what they are doing is harmful to them on many levels, and yet this knowledge does little to help them stop.

On the other hand, each of us has a belief system, and over time that belief system will influence our behavior. Our belief system is like the operating system on a computer. We don't see it; it is just there, and it is having an impact on everything we do.

Sometimes that belief system is supported—for good or bad—by widespread cultural beliefs. Such has been the case with smoking cigarettes. We knew for years that smoking was bad for us, but it wasn't until cigarette smoking became a less socially-acceptable and more socially-objectionable behavior that many people finally found the strength to stop. Even now, among groups where smoking is esteemed, many who would otherwise stop, don't.

Likewise, we Christians have a belief system regarding sexuality, and it is determined, ironically, both by what we hear the world saying and by what we hear the church saying. Please understand, however, that when I speak of "hearing" these polar messages about sex, I'm really talking about very subtle, though powerful, messages. In fact, when confronted directly by what the world or the church is saying, most of us will declare, "I don't believe that!" But read on, and I think you will see how these false beliefs have had an impact on you.

In our efforts to remain sexually pure, I believe that we

can be helped greatly if we identify and root out certain false beliefs.

Belief #1: Sex Is Dirty

The first false belief that influences Christians is that sex is bad, dirty, even a curse on man. I remember when I was a young Christian agreeing with a fellow new believer that it would be wonderful if we didn't have these bodies to deal with. What we meant, of course, is how great it would be to not have to struggle with sexual desires.

Throughout the history of the church, in every part of the church, the theme has kept recurring that sex is more of a curse than a blessing. In his Gospel of the Body teachings, Pope John Paul II took a strong stand against the heresy of Manichaeism—the belief that matter and the body are evil and the spirit is good—that has plagued the church almost since the beginning. You may say that you are a more enlightened Christian and you don't view sex in a negative light. If so, let me give you a little test.

God may allow our temptations to continue in order to bring us to deeper levels of repentance or healing, but His ultimate goal for us is freedom.

You see an attractive person who is not your spouse and you feel some sexual attractions. Is this good or bad?

I believe it is good. God built sexual attractions into us. He made men to find women sexually attractive, and women to find men sexually attractive. You feel sexual attraction? Good. You are functioning as God made you to function. You might even feel a little delight in looking at that attractive person.

But what if the attraction is to someone of the same sex? Is that good or bad? It is still good that you feel

continued on page 2

Proper Place

continued from page 1

sexual attractions. You were not made to be asexual. Yes, something went wrong in your development so that you don't see the opposite sex as your complement. But remember, we say over and over again that having homosexual attractions is not a sin, but the sign of a need for growth and healing. Unfortunately, because many tend to see all sexual desires—unless directed towards our spouse—as evil, it is hard not come down even harder on “unnatural” sexual desires.

Attraction is not lust. This is where so many Christians get confused. If you can take temporary pleasure in observing the masculine or feminine qualities in another person, that is good.

It is good unless we carry the attractions to another level. Even then, it is not the attraction that is sinful, but where we take it. Here are three ways we can misuse our sexual attractions:

1. *We desire to possess the person we are attracted to. We fall into covetousness.*
2. *We view the person as less than a whole person; we make the person an object.* Pope John Paul II said that the problem with pornography is not that it shows too much, but that it shows too little. In other words, it shows the body, not the person, and in showing only the body, it demeans the person.
3. *We allow the attraction to gain too great a power.* Not turning our minds to other things, we start to obsess, or to use a better Christian term, we fall into idolatry. (Ironically, the very fact that we view sexual attraction as evil—a forbidden fruit—can actually contribute to the obsession or idolatry.)

Belief #2: We Must Have Sex

The second false belief comes from today's culture, and it says that we must have sex. This gives tremendous and undue importance to sex. The world's view is that to be healthy and whole we must be having sex. This is why non-religious people fight abstinence programs and why efforts at stopping the AIDS epidemic have always been half-hearted. Unfortunately, this view runs through the sex education curriculum in schools. Those who advocate the “we have to have sex” position are not basing their view on scientific evidence. Most likely, they put it forth to provide a justification for their own sexual desires or behavior.

Making sex an absolute need has helped lead our culture to become sex-obsessed, why sex has become a constant theme in books, movies and television shows. Recently I stayed in a hotel—part of an international chain—that offered six in-room movie channels; two of them were for regular movies and four of them for “adult” movies.

As Christians, most of us would say that we don't buy into the “we must have sex; abstinence is impossible” beliefs. But we can't help but be influenced by the prominence our culture has placed on sex. In our ministry we see this in men and women who wonder if abstinence from masturbation is possible. We see it in single people who can see only a bleak future in a life ahead that might be devoid of any sexual relationships. We see it in people frantically wanting to deal with their sexual problems, when in fact other problems in their life are much more serious.

Placing too much importance on sex can actually hinder our pursuit of purity because *the greater importance we place on having sex, the more difficult abstinence is.*

Belief #3: I Will Never Be Free

This is the natural view of someone whose struggles with sexual sin have lasted longer than he or she thinks they should. This view is reinforced by the psychological community, reflecting its relative inability to help people with their sexual struggles. But to deny that the Christian cannot find significant, if not total, freedom from sexual struggles is to deny the power of the Gospel. The potential to fall back into sexual struggles—and even sexual sin—may always be present in this life; Satan is always sneaking about, and the flesh will not be perfect until we are with the Lord. But the Scriptures give us wonderful images of being cleansed, of being washed, of experiencing victory over sin. To think that these promises don't apply to our sexuality leaves us without hope in our battle for sexual purity and wholeness. Again, maybe the problem is that we see sex as too big and important a thing. Too big for God?

Putting Sex in Its Proper Place

For us to put sex in its proper place, we are going to have to replace each of these false beliefs with true ones. Accepting these truths will not likely bring instant healing, but reminding ourselves and each other of these truths over time will affect the way we behave. Ponder these truths, and store them away to remind yourselves of them from time to time.

continued on page 3

Marriage and Singleness in the Church: An Honest Conversation

Regeneration Life event sponsored by Regeneration of Northern Virginia

Are you a married adult attending a Christian Church? Are you a single adult attending the same church? What have you noticed about the relationships between married and single persons in your congregation?

Come join in this enlightening, revealing and possibly surprising conversation in which married and single adults share insights on life, friendship and wholeness in the body of Christ.

This exciting afternoon features Connally Gilliam, author of *Revelations of a Single Woman: Loving the Life I didn't Expect*, along with panelists Byron List, Headmaster of the Rivendel School; Kristen List, dedicated mother; and Rev. Michael C. Worsley, World Vision's Program Director for Children and Youth Ministries.

Admission is free. A love offering for the ministry will be accepted. Come, join the conversation: Saturday, November 18, 2006 at The Falls Church Episcopal, North Fairfax Drive, Falls Church, Virginia (Historic Church Building). 3:30 p.m. For directions please go to www.thefallschurch.org.

Proper Place

continued from page 2

but none of us is capable of experiencing all of the blessings God has put on this earth.

Here they are:

1. Sex is a wonderful gift from God. He gave us sex to be a blessing. In His desire that we not be alone, He created an automatic response in us that would draw us to someone who is not like us. It is easy to see the beauty and wonderful nature of sex in the marriage bed when husband and wife are truly one, but God didn't give sexual desires only to married people; he gave them to single people too. Sexual desire is a manifestation of the longing He created in us to connect with other people. Misdirected and carried too far, this desire to connect will bring harm rather than good, but the existence of the desire itself is a sign of life and health, not of sin and depravity.

2. We don't have to have sex. I recently asked a friend who, like me, had had prostate cancer, if his treatment had harmed his sex life. He responded quickly, "Sex is no big deal." Obviously he didn't want to answer my question, but there was much truth in his brush off. Sex is wonderful, but it's not as big of a deal as our culture would have us believe. Think of the vast number of blessings that are to be enjoyed in this life: deep friendships, music and art, the glories of nature, good food, intimacy with God, humor, friendly competition, and on and on. Biologically we don't have to have sex. We are missing something good if we don't experience a wonderful sexual relationship in marriage,

3. As we seek the Lord, the struggles will diminish and perhaps even go away. As Christians, we live a life of trust, of believing in those things that are unseen. In the long run, God never fails this trust. Where wrongful patterns of sexual attraction and response have taken root in us, they may not go away easily. But in the longer run, one of the great promises of the New Testament is freedom. We know that this means freedom from the power of sin, but it must also mean freedom from life-dominating temptations. Our new life is to be experienced here, not just in heaven. God may allow our temptations to continue in order to bring us to deeper levels of repentance or healing, but His ultimate goal for us is freedom. Keep reminding yourself of this.

On my recent trip to Poland, I visited with some Dominican monks (their order had published my book in Polish), and I was taken by the healthy and happy demeanor of these priests and brothers. In interacting with them, I thought of how in taking their vows of celibacy, they had decided that their sexual desires would not determine the course of their lives. How remarkable. And how rational.

What is the proper place for sex? It is a wonderful gift from God, but sometimes we have to tell ourselves—truthfully—as my friend said, "It's no big deal." ■

Financial News

Regeneration Budget (October 1, 2006 – September 30, 2007)

Income:	
Overall Contributions	\$393,000
Program Fees	\$ 33,000
TOTAL INCOME	\$426,000
Expenses:	
Operations	\$ 76,000
Total Operations:	\$ 76,000
Staffing:	
Salaries (3 full time, 2 part-time)	\$209,000
Medical Insurance, Medicare, Taxes	\$ 80,000
Travel, Development, etc.	\$ 20,000
Total Staffing:	\$309,000
Direct Ministry:	
Newsletter (6 issues/year)	\$ 13,000
Program Expenses, Advertising, etc.	\$ 28,000
Total Direct Ministry:	\$ 41,000
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$426,000
NET INCOME/EXPENSE:	\$ 0

To the left, we've included an abbreviated version of our fiscal year 2007 budget. Please note that this budget does not include a full salary for an additional person in Northern Virginia—a position we must hire for soon. When we revisit this budget in January 2007, we hope to be able to adjust the budget to include this position. The need is there but giving between now and December 30 will determine how feasible it is. Please prayerfully consider how you might become a part of answering this need. Thank you so much!

In our last newsletter, we indicated that we needed \$40,000 above and beyond our regular giving to move into the fall unencumbered. Thanks to the generous giving of many of you, we are making headway on that need, but at the writing of this newsletter, we still need an additional \$30,000. If you haven't already, would you send a gift today to help us make up the difference? ■

Please Pray With Us . . .

Thanksgiving – We thank God that we are finally fully moved back into our Baltimore space after renovations and remodeling after last year's flood. This means we are able to hold our programs on-site, which is a tremendous benefit to what we can do in many ways.

We also thank God for His continued presence and power in our midst. As we've begun the new ministry year, both our branches have experienced His involvement in remarkable ways.

Petitions – Please pray for the finances to hire the right person to work with us in Northern Virginia alongside Bob Ragan. And then please pray that right person!

Secondly, please pray for Jay and Ruth Wilson, as they continue to adjust to life in Baltimore. They left family and friends to serve the Lord with us in Baltimore.

And lastly, please pray for spiritual protection for this ministry and all who partner with us. As our Father leads us to fight for those broken and in bondage to sexual sin, the enemy is fighting back.

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

Regeneration Is...

Baltimore Office

Joshua Glaser
Executive Director

Alan Medinger
Executive Director Emeritus

Jay Wilson
Baltimore Ministry Associate

Laura Suffecool
Accounting Manager

Northern Virginia Office

Bob Ragan
Northern Virginia
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)