

July 2007

*"Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness."
~ Romans 6:12, 13*



NEWS
Regeneration
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Your Body Is Good (Bless These Eyes!)

By Josh Glaser

S ometime in the 1990's, a popular late-night variety show ran a comedy sketch in which an ordinary man had an unusual condition: He was plagued with eyes that produced beams of red light so that everyone knew exactly where his eyes fell at any given moment. Whenever he was thusly caught taking an uninvited glance somewhere he shouldn't (like a woman's chest, for instance), he would look at the camera and exclaim, "Damn these eyes!"

I remember the sketch not so much because it was funny, but much more so because I could relate with this man's desperate battle. Many of you can probably relate. Years of faltering with sexual sins have left us believing it is right to say something to the effect of, "Damn this body and its sexual urges," or "One day, we'll be freed finally from this body."

But as Christians, however well we can relate with this character's desire to be rid of his fleshly battle, we must not come to the same conclusion he does regarding the body. Our bodies are not the problem. And we must not view them as though they are the source of our sexual sin struggles. To do so is actually counterproductive to us as we seek to walk in sexual purity.

Your Body Is Good

Let's begin with what to some may seem counterintuitive: Your body is good.

In Genesis 1, we read that in the beginning God created man and woman in His image (1:27) and that His creation was "very good" (1:31). In Genesis 2, the writer is clear to point out that God did not create them solely as spirit;

He made them spirits and *bodies* (2:7 and 2:21 - 22). Their bodies were not an afterthought, a place where God deposited their spirits for a time. No, their bodies were an *a priori* element of who they were, and amazingly, a key ingredient in how they bore the image of God in their beings as man and woman. A part of creation's *very good*.

There remains in men and women everywhere God's very good image in us—not just in our spirits, but in our bodies as well.

If we fail to view our bodies as good and loved by God, we hinder our progress toward sexual purity. And when we view our bodies as irreparably bad...we set ourselves up for failure.

Now there is a point of confusion here for many, so it bears addressing: Our physical bodies are not the enemy that the writers of the New Testament are referring to when they talk about the problem of "the flesh." I think a great deal of confusion comes from the fact that experientially, we're not always sure what is the body (physical body) as God made it, and what is the flesh (the sin nature).

But great damage is done when we mistakenly believe that the enemy flesh is the same as the physical body. I'll highlight just a few passages of Scripture that I hope will help make the point clear for us as we move forward:

Consider the following verses: "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my *flesh*" (Romans 7:18); "For the desires of the *flesh* are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the *flesh*, for these are opposed to each other" (Galatians 5:17); and "Those who are in the *flesh* cannot please God. You however are not in the *flesh* but in the Spirit . . ." (Romans 8:8, 9). Take just a few moments to consider each verse

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and what the implications would be if Paul were referring to the physical body. It doesn't take long to see that he must be referring to something else.

In contrast, look at these verses that clearly refer to our physical bodies: "I praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well" (Psalm 139:14); "In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own *bodies*" (Ephesians 5:28); "Do you not know that your *bodies* are members of Christ? . . . Or do you not know that your *body* is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your *body*" (1 Corinthians 6:15, 19 – 20).

Once we understand that our enemy "the flesh" is *not* our physical bodies, we will find greater encouragement and boldness in the journey to sexual purity. We do have an enemy flesh, but that enemy is not the same as our flesh and blood, our physical bodies. The enemy flesh is an enemy to God and to our own sexual purity. Our bodies are not.

This does not mean that our bodies are immune from the fall. They are in need of rescuing just as much as our spirits are. And this is why Christ came bodily. When God looks upon us, He is not waiting for the day we can be rid of these human

bodies. No, Christ's bodily life, bodily death, and bodily resurrection attest to that. If anything, God is waiting for the day our human bodies will be restored. "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our *bodies*" (Romans 8:23). He loves our bodies. Knowing this matters tremendously in our journey away from sexual sin and onward to sexual purity.

How You View Your Body: A Hindrance or a Help

If we fail to view our bodies as good and loved by God, we hinder our progress toward sexual purity. And when we view our bodies as irreparably bad, enemies to us in our battle for purity, we set ourselves up for failure. But when we view our bodies as good gifts from God, redeemed through Christ, sexual purity will come to us more easily. In fact, we may come to find that our bodies are actually allies to us in our journey to purity.

There's a simple but profound reason why this is so: We tend to behave in accordance with what we believe about ourselves. In other words, we adapt to the identity we think we have. If we believe our bodies are bad, we will tend to do bad things with our bodies. On the other hand, if we believe our bodies are good, we will tend to use them for good. Sexually speaking, if we believe that our bodies are sexually corrupt, we are going to be much more apt to sin sexually. (This is one reason sexual abuse can be a contributing factor to the development of homosexuality or other sexual disorders.) But when we believe that having a sexual body is a good gift from God and that Christ has cleansed our bodies, we will be much more apt to walk in sexual purity.

For many, their Christian upbringing did not discuss the good of sex and sexuality. For some, this meant that sex and sexuality were brought up only in the context of messages about sexual sin. Absent of any godly celebration of our bodies' sexual nature, many of us went to the only place we knew to go with our sexual urges—to the dark.

And worse yet, we may have transferred these messages about sex onto God. When we believe God dislikes that our bodies are sexual, we'll be more prone to keep our sexuality out of our relationship with Him. And then it's not much of a leap to come to believe that even having a desire for sex is a moral failure. This in turn, leaves us discouraged even when we've done nothing wrong.

Please Pray With Us . . .

Prayer Requests: Please pray for . . .

1. Bob Ragan who has been appointed to the Exodus International Board of Directors (*see page 3*).
2. The smooth and swift hire of a new ministry person to join our team in the Northern Virginia branch office.
3. Spiritual protection and strength as we continue ministering in an area much opposed by the enemy of our souls.

Thanksgiving: Join us in thanking God for . . .

1. The needed funds to increase our staff in Northern Virginia (*see Financial Column, page 3*).
2. Lives changed through His gracious, healing love for His sons and daughters.
3. Leadership teams that are growing both in size and in God-given depth to minister to the deep needs of those who come to us for help.

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

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In contrast, when we live in the knowledge that God created and delights that we are sexual creatures, we'll more willingly bring our sex lives to Him and submit them to His loving and guiding authority. What a difference it makes when we can rejoice in our desires for sex. Even when a sexual desire surfaces for that which is sinful (i.e. adultery, homosexuality, lust), there may be good hidden within it—perhaps a deep desire for connection, for one's own manhood or womanhood, for relief from pain, or for the good of touch.

We must recognize that temptation is not the same as sin. He delights in your sexual desires, and far from wanting to remove them, He wants to untangle them from the sexual sin that does such damage to your manhood or womanhood. You may not be able to discern the difference between what is God's gift of sexuality and what is the fallen flesh. But God can, and He is ready and willing to help you, to walk with you, and teach you to manage your sexual passions rightly. Jesus had sexual desires, too, and managed them all without sin.

Practicing Redeemed Body Living

Finally, let me offer a handful of practical ideas as to how to begin to practice a more helpful approach to viewing your body rightly—not as an enemy to your sexual purity, but as a very good gift from God, redeemed by Jesus (one day to be fully realized), and allies to our progress to sexually holy living.

- 1. Memorize some of the Scripture verses that affirm the great worth of your body.** A friend of mine taped select passages of Psalm 139 to his bathroom mirror and would read it while still naked after his daily shower.
- 2. Practice thanking God for your body, including your sexual desires.** When a sexual desire is focused on something sinful, ask Jesus to show you the good of your sexuality, and to untwist the good from the evil.
- 3. If you sin sexually, confess and repent quickly.** And let your body be a part of this. Confess with your mouth,

Bob Ragan Elected to Exodus Board
 We are proud to announce that Bob Ragan has once again been elected to the board of Exodus International. In this role, Bob will play a part in shaping and guiding the future of the Exodus movement.

Also of interest, Melissa Coffey, who used to work with Regeneration in Northern Virginia, was elected Board Chairwoman. Your prayers for both Bob and Melissa are greatly appreciated.

use your arms to press your sins into Jesus wounds on the cross, kneel or lay prostrated. The use of physical symbols like a cross, crucifix, cleansing water, anointing oil, etc. can be very powerful here, as can the physical presence of another person who can hear your confession and pronounce your forgiveness.

4. If you sin sexually, instead of hating your body for it, take time to confess to God how you misused the good gift of your body. For example, "Father, you gave me my eyes to see beauty. Thank you. But today I misused my eyes and lusted after others sexually. Please forgive me. Please teach me to use my eyes aright—to use them not for lust but for love." You may even want to apologize to your eyes or other misused body parts.

5. Use your body for good. Worship with your voice, your ears, your feet, your arms. Do acts of service. Be physically affectionate in healthy ways with holy boundaries. Create. Eat healthy and exercise, do physical labor and rest. Remember, your body is a part of how you bear God's image.

"Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). ■

FINANCIAL COLUMN

Over the past year, Regeneration has worked diligently to move to a more stable financial footing than we were experiencing the prior two years. To this end, we made the very difficult decision to hold back on hiring any additional ministry staff, even though we were in great need of additional help, especially in our Northern Virginia branch. Now, thanks to the generous support of some friends of the ministry, we are now able to move ahead with hiring another part time person to help meet the needs of the many men and women caught hopelessly in sexual sin and brokenness.

We have further to go, however, and need your generous support to continue moving forward. This is a call to help grow Regeneration so we can serve the large numbers of men and women coming to us seeking help for sexual sin and sexual identity problems, many of whom do not know where else to turn. Thank you for giving to the furtherance of Christ's work to "seek and to save those who are lost" in sexual sin and brokenness! ■

MINISTRY NEWS

October 5th – Northern Virginia 20th Anniversary Dessert

Mark your calendar now and plan to be with us on Friday, October 5th, and join us for an evening of worship and testimony as we celebrate 20 years of ministry to the sexually broken in Northern Virginia. Early in the life of this ministry, the need became obvious for a Regeneration branch in the DC Metro area. Soon, Bob Ragan joined Regeneration’s staff and since then the ministry there reached thousands of men and women with Christ’s life-changing love. An offering for the work of Regeneration Northern Virginia will be received. We will be sending out more information as the date approaches.

Wives Group: Breaking Free

If you a wife whose husband struggles with sexual addiction or homosexuality, we invite you to join Regeneration’s wives group for 11 weeks of Beth Moore’s study *Breaking Free: Making Liberty in Christ a Reality in Life*. The group meets the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month from 7 – 9 p.m. Each week will include a video and time for discussion with other wives progressing toward greater freedom in Christ. For more information, please contact Karen at 410-692-0468.

Living Waters Applications

We are now accepting applications for this fall’s *Living Waters* programs. *Living Waters* is an intensive, Christ-centered healing program for men and women seeking sexual and relational wholeness, particularly for those who struggle with homosexuality, sexual addictions, or past sexual abuse. We invite you to consider joining us in Fairfax, VA or Baltimore, MD for this life-changing opportunity. This program fills up quickly and space is limited, so please contact us soon! Contact us for an application: In Northern VA, call 703-591-4673; in Baltimore, call 410-661-0284, ext. 2.

Baltimore Men’s Sexual Purity Group

If you are a man who struggles with habitual sexual sins, do you long for freedom and purity? If so, take advantage of Regeneration’s *New Beginnings* program, available for men young and old, married and single. *New Beginnings* provides Scripturally sound teaching without shallow pat answers, as well as opportunities for weekly accountability and encouragement from other men also on the road to sexual purity. Contact Jay Wilson at info@RegenerationMinistries.org or call 410-661-0284.

Return to the Field: A Fellowship for Men

For men who grew up feeling on the outside of the community of men, playing sports may have been an area of great intimidation and perhaps even alienation or shame. Difficulties connecting with other boys in a context of healthy, physical challenge has played a formative part in why many an adult man still feels outside the fellowship of men. But Christ doesn’t want us to live on the “outside.” Join men from Regeneration who gather the last Saturday of every month to learn a new sport, practice together, and enjoy each others’ fellowship on the playing field. For more information, E-mail info@RegenerationMinistries.org or call 410-661-0284.

Regeneration Is . . .

Staff Team

Joshua Glaser
Executive Director

Bob Ragan
Northern Virginia
Director

Jay Wilson
Baltimore Ministry
Associate

Devon Medinger
Accountant

Stacey Feehley
Administrative Assistant

Alan Medinger
Founder &
Executive Director Emeritus

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)