

September/October 2007

*"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,  
for he who promised is faithful."  
~ Hebrews 10:23*



## When Is It Sin?

by Alan Medinger

Tom comes from a homosexual past. It has been years since he has engaged in any homosexual activity or has even thought he would want to. He is married and has a sexual relationship with his wife that brings them both great joy. And Tom is quite content with his manhood. He no longer feels like the little boy in the presence of "real men." He is comfortable in just being one of the guys.

But Tom still likes to look at strong men. A muscular, shirtless man shows up on TV and Tom feels his heart speed up a little as he takes a second look. When watching a ballgame, he finds himself sizing up men in the strength department looking at the width of their shoulders, the thickness of their necks, the size of their forearms. And once in a while, he will see an interaction between two men in a movie or TV show—an interaction that would have no sexual connotation to most viewers, but in Tom it triggers memories or fantasies from the past and he feels a little sexual arousal.

In each situation Tom doesn't dwell on what has attracted him. The shirtless man is soon off the screen and forgotten. Tom gets caught up in the ballgame and his focus shifts away from the players' physiques. With the interaction of the two men, he thinks about it for a minute, tells himself this isn't good, and calls on Jesus as he has trained himself to do over the years. Intentionally he shifts his mind to other things and this too is soon forgotten.

In any of these scenarios has Tom sinned? Does he need to repent for something? I believe that most same-sex attracted (SSA) men who come through our ministry, if they were in Tom's position, would feel that they had sinned, and would need to confess and repent of their sin.

To the contrary, I believe that in each situation as described here, Tom has not sinned, and does not need to repent either for what he has done or for what has gone on inside of him.

What follows may not be applicable to every man or woman on the road to recovery. It is intended primarily for those who are well along in their healing and for those who have developed an intimacy with the Lord that involves an openness to hearing His voice and confession to Him as a normal part of their spiritual life.

Although there is a risk that the counsel offered here could be misused, or could backfire on those not ready for it, I believe taking the risk is justified. The matter of when we have sinned and when we have not is critical in the lives of Christian men and women overcoming

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### Northern Virginia 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dessert Celebration October 5<sup>th</sup>!

*The Honor of Your Presence is Requested*

**Friday, October 5th**

*from 7:30 - 10:00 p.m.*

*Columbia Baptist Church*

*Falls Church, Virginia*

*for*

*Regeneration of Northern Virginia's*

*20th Anniversary Celebration Dessert*

*A Benefit Event for Regeneration of Northern Virginia*

**Please RSVP to:**

Regeneration

Northern Virginia Anniversary Dessert

P.O. Box 9830

Baltimore, MD 21284

or call 410-661-0284 for more information

*(Business Casual Attire)*

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SSA and sex addiction. (Consulting with those who know you well as well as your spiritual mentors about your “readiness” for the counsel that follows would be a good idea.)

**THE HEAVY COST OF FALSE GUILT**

There are many areas in which Christians regularly fail to recognize, or actually deny, their sins. Sex is usually not one of them. In fact, I believe that in matters of sexuality mature Christians are more likely to see sin where it does not exist than fail to see sin where it is really present. My own experience has been that my sexual sins are all too obvious to me, whereas I am very slow to recognize sins that are fueled by my ego, my judgmentalism or my selfishness. I think this is a common experience.

At one time I believed that when you were in doubt about something being a sin you should confess it. What harm could it do? Now I believe that false guilt can be extremely destructive and can hinder the healing process. When we are constantly entertaining false thoughts that we have sinned we:

1. Can blind ourselves to the real progress we are making.
2. Live in the role of weaklings, rather than living as victors—as men and women who can truly do all things in Christ who strengthens us.
3. Have our relationship with God overly focused on sin at the expense of other ways we might be relating to Him: as healer, guide, friend, and most importantly, object of our devotion.
4. Have expanded the area of the forbidden, and thereby given it more power.

There is little joy in the life of a sin-focused man or woman, whether the sin on which we dwell is real or false. There is little sense of victory and little sense that God is moving us along.

**TRUTHS THAT CAN PREVENT FALSE GUILT**

We feel guilt wrongly because we have some wrong ideas about temptation and sexual desire. Specifically, we fail to recognize that:

**1. Temptation is sometimes God’s will.** Temptation, therefore, is not a sin, nor is the experiencing of temptation proof that we are bad people or have done something wrong. I used to be puzzled by “lead us not into temptation” in the Lord’s prayer, Why, I thought, would the Lord ever lead anyone into temptation? Then someone pointed out to me two situations of enormous importance where God did lead people into temptation.

First, He placed Adam and Eve just where He had planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden. He made the tree very attractive, and He forbade them to eat of it. He had clearly set them up to be tempted.

Second, we read in Matthew 4;1, *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* Unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus resisted His temptations, but both temptations were arranged by the Lord.

With regard to Adam and Eve, the temptation was almost certainly there to give them an opportunity to freely acknowledge the Lordship of their Creator, to show Him honor and respect through their obedience. With respect to Jesus, His long time in the wilderness and the temptations that he endured were likely a part of God’s

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**Please Pray With Us . . .**

**PRAYER REQUESTS** *Please pray for . . .*

- A smooth and successful start to this fall’s Living Waters programs and new quarter of New Beginnings. Specifically, pray for the staff and volunteers who work “overtime” during this time of the year, and pray for the new and returning participants as they enter into unknown territory with Christ.
- The Northern Virginia 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration & Dessert on October 5<sup>th</sup> (*see page 1*). Pray attendance would be high, new ministry partners would be developed, and most especially that Jesus Christ would be glorified.
- The healthy birth of **Jay and Ruth Wilson’s** fourth child coming in January.

**THANKSGIVING** *Thank God with us for . . .*

- Twenty years of ministry in the Northern Virginia / DC Metro area.
- **Bob Ragan’s** upcoming ordination (*see page 3*).
- God’s financial provision over the past 9 months (*see Financial Column, page 4*).
- The great hope of what the Father has in store in the coming ministry year.

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

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making Him *perfect through suffering* (Hebrews 2:10). The word translated as perfect does not mean flawless—Jesus was never flawed—but means brought into maturity, or made able to do that for which He was sent. For Jesus, His temptation was a part of His preparation to fulfill His great calling at Calvary.

**2. Sexual attraction is not a sin.** We were made to feel sexual attractions. That’s an undisputable fact. But how about desiring that which God has ruled out of bounds? Is that sinful? Or isn’t it at least evidence of sin in us? Taking the example of Adam and Eve, we would have to answer with a firm “No” to both of these questions. Adam and Eve were attracted to the fruit of the tree *before* they decided to eat of it, and before they actually took a bite. The desire was a manifestation of their free will, not evidence of their sinfulness

In the Christian context, “temptation” almost always means the temptation to do something wrong. In the wilderness Jesus was tempted—to do some things that were wrong—but He was without sin.

**3. Sexual arousal is not a sin.** Just as sexual attraction is not a sin, neither is sexual arousal. The first feelings of sexual arousal are most often totally involuntary. Our bodies have been trained that when certain stimuli appear, our body responds. It is true that regarding our sexuality, much of this training of our bodies may have involved sin—recurring sexual fantasies that we willingly engaged in—but the response we feel today is not a sin. Even when the arousal feels good, and God made it to feel good, the arousal itself is not sin.

**WHEN HAVE WE SINNED?**

Of course, sexual sin is a reality. You don’t need me to tell you that. It is what we do in response to the temptation, attraction or sexual feelings that is critical. There is an old saying, “You can’t keep a bird from landing on your head, but you can keep it from building a nest in your hair.” If we invite the temptation in to enjoy its company—even a little bit—we have moved into *lust* and that is a sin.

But lust is not the only sin that can be prompted by our sexual desires. If we deliberately do something or go somewhere with the express purpose of gaining sexual stimulation that could lead to sin, we are in *rebellion*, and this is a serious sin. I believe that to deliberately invite temptation that can lead to sin is to say to Jesus, “I know that You went to the cross to save me from my sins, but I am going to have my pleasure anyway.” This is serious stuff.

Here, we need to be aware of our particular vulnerabilities. If we rule out everything that could lead to temptation—we never go to the beach, we never go to the movies, etc.—we fall into a counter-productive legalism. But each of us has certain danger areas that we know that we need to avoid, and if we find ourselves regularly going into those places, we need to examine our hearts.

Finally, our sexual desires can lead us into the sin of *idolatry*. Tom, our example at the beginning of the article, found pleasure in looking at a muscular, shirtless man. This may reflect some brokenness in Tom, but in and of itself, the attraction is not sinful. However, if Tom finds himself surfing the TV channels for an hour several nights a week looking for good looking shirtless men, Tom could well be into the sin of idolatry. The secular world would call it obsession. It is assigning too much value to something, often to the point of worshipping it. This is sinful, and needs to be dealt with.

When we allow a temptation to play around in our mind too long or when we take two or three looks at the shirtless man, a primary factor is degree. If we allow a sinful image to remain in our mind for five seconds, is that a sin? How about ten seconds? If we look at the shirtless man twice, have we sinned? How about four times? I think you can see where I’m heading with this. I’m describing a Pharisaical kind of legalism. Five seconds it’s not a sin; six seconds it is. I believe that most of us know when we

**Ordination of Bob Ragan**

We are proud to announce that on October 20th, Bob Ragan, Regeneration’s Northern Virginia Director, will be ordained into the Vocational Deaconate of the Anglican Communion. The ordination will take place at The Falls Church in Falls Church, Virginia. The ordination will take place at The Falls Church, where Bob is a member, in Falls Church, Virginia.

For more information, please call our offices during regular phone hours.

## FINANCIAL COLUMN

As we enter into our new fiscal year on October 1st, we set forth with conviction that the long-term demands of this ministry will require strategic financial growth. More and more men and women are struggling with sexual sins and brokenness, and they need help. For their sakes, we've begun taking another look at our financial situation, looking not only to sustain where we are today, but also to grow in the years to come.

We're proud to say that in fiscal year 2007 we cut expenses, began the development of a sustainable reserve fund, strengthened our donation receipt and acknowledgement system, expanded our administrative support staff, and started new initiatives to broaden our network of ministry partners. As a result, we are on a firmer footing financially than we have been at this time of year for over five years.

But we have a long way to go. Financial solvency is an important piece, but not the goal—the goal is to help all men and women in our areas of influence who are seeking freedom from homosexuality and sexual addiction.

As we complete our budgeting process for fiscal year 2008, we ask you to pray faithfully for us, and we ask you to give generously. For those who need Christ's power and love to find freedom from sexual sin, please stand with us. Thank you and God bless you!

*To receive our 2008 budget, please contact our office after October 10.*

## My Cause Is . . . Regeneration!



Make a \$100 contribution to [Regeneration](#) without opening your wallet!

From now until October 12, open a new Suntrust checking account, accept a corresponding Visa Check (debit) Card, use it to make a purchase by November 15, and Suntrust will contribute \$100 to Regeneration\*. That's it! Visit [www.RegenerationMinistries.org](http://www.RegenerationMinistries.org) or go to a Suntrust branch for more information. Thank you for your support!

\*Regeneration does not endorse Suntrust Bank, but we appreciate their willingness to give to Regeneration and other Christ-centered 501(c)(3) organizations through this promotional offer. Please participate using your own discretion.

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have sinned, that when we have really yielded ourselves to the grip of lust, it is quite obvious to us. Therefore, rather than give temptation an undue power over us, I believe when we are in doubt, we are wise to assume that we have not sinned. And we move on with life.

This will seem like dangerous thinking to some, and it could lead to rationalizations by those who would use it as such. But, if we are seeking to please the Lord, and we are spending time with Him, His Holy Spirit will give us the mid-course corrections we need to make to avoid both legalism and license.

Our purpose in life is to know and love God. Our obedience is a means to that end; it is not the end in and of itself. To know God is to know His grace, to enjoy His freedom, and to grow in the ways that He would have us live. ■

## 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)