

*My eyes will be on the faithful in the land,
that they may dwell with me; he whose
walk is blameless will minister to me.*
~ Psalm 101:6



NEWS
Regeneration
www.RegenerationMinistries.org

Choosing To Be An Overcomer

by Rev. Bob Ragan

January 2008 marked my 15th anniversary of working full time with Regeneration of Northern Virginia and my 20th anniversary of first seeking the ministry for support. Throughout these years, I have seen my understanding of what it means to be an “overcomer” change. Overcoming sexual sin is so much broader in its concept and application than I first thought. I’ve also realized it is not guaranteed but a goal which I must pursue with every aspect of my being.

I would like to share with you how the Lord has been working in me about what it means to become an overcomer. I hope it may challenge you to see your own personal struggles in light of a bigger picture. I also pray it will provide a new perspective through which to see any challenge or trial you experience.

BEING ON OVERCOMER IS NOT GUARANTEED

The book of Revelation records Jesus’ letters to the 7 churches. In each letter, Jesus indicates that to those who overcome He will grant a number of incredible blessings. Later in Revelation 21:7, we read, “He who overcomes will inherit all of this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”

I once believed that as Christians we are all overcomers. Indeed, we each have the *full capacity* to be overcomers because of the Incarnational Reality of Christ in us. However, having the capacity to become an overcomer is not the same as *being* an overcomer. A character in the the movie *The Matrix* puts it this way: “It is one thing to know the path and another thing to walk it.” Active obedience and ongoing yielding are required.

In Revelation, Jesus was addressing the believers in the 7 churches; he wasn’t addressing non-believers. And He does address the letters “to the overcomers...” Rather, Jesus said it is those *who overcome* who will receive the blessings indicated. For many years I just assumed I was an overcomer. I no longer believe this to be true.

In October of 2007 I began to journal about this change of thinking that I was experiencing. I sensed a new fervor begin to arise from the depths of my being. My prayers became more focused as I asked the Holy Spirit to start conforming and transforming me into an overcomer.

BE CAREFUL FOR WHAT YOU PRAY!

I became intentional, interceding in my prayer journal to be transformed into an overcomer. I somehow knew this prayer was not to be a light, superficial request. This prayer was to have a deep impact on the very way I approached every aspect of my life.

In November, I began to experience very difficult circumstances with one happening right after another. Some of these challenges were so intense I had great difficulty staying focused. I began to isolate or escape for hours watching television. This would be followed with feelings of self-hatred or condemnation quickly flooding my heart. It was a relentless time of trial.

The passage from 1 Peter 4:12 which says, “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you” would come to mind, but I felt these trials were hitting me at another level. In one of my quiet times

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waiting for God's healing word, the Holy Spirit gently broke through asking me "Bob, how would you as an overcomer respond to these challenges?" Suddenly, it was as if scales dropped from my eyes.

My trials took on a whole different appearance for me. As I have learned, God often will answer our prayers in ways not expected. My desire to truly be an overcomer would occur in the trial itself, not through cognitive understanding alone. Oswald Chambers writes, "God does not give us overcoming life: He gives us life as we overcome." (*My Utmost for His Highest* – 8/2)

TURNING TRIALS INTO OPPORTUNITIES

The Holy Spirit broke and turned me up and outward, shifting my focus off of my circumstances. Although *I knew* how to do this, I had allowed myself to become lost while inwardly focusing on my trials. I needed to remind myself of Psalm 34:5: "Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame." When I keep my focus inward I see only my reflection looking back at me.

A weight was lifted off of me. These trials weren't merely spiritual warfare but were orchestrated to challenge me in a

new way. Although I have learned much these last 20 years, there is much yet to learn. I am always in the state of becoming, accepting the "what is" and looking with expectancy towards the "not yet." The Lord often takes previously learned truths and brings new depths out of them.

I now see my trials, first knowing not to be surprised about them, as *opportunities* for God to use as means of transformation. Whether it is a car cutting me off on the road or being wounded by someone's rejection, the question now comes to mind, "How can I overcome this situation?" How will the Holy Spirit enable me to respond in a Christ-centered way rather than react in a self-protective manner?

Does this seem to be simplistic thinking? I don't believe it is. It is a shift in perspective, a paradigm shift for *seeing*. This shift was as significant for me as it was when I realized who I am in Christ: that my feelings and/or temptations do not define who I am as a person. I have another perspective of what it means to have Divine objectivity, seeing with His vision.

I know full well Romans 8:28 but here was another dimension to it. Every challenge, trial, or painful event is an opportunity for me not only to be more transformed into His Image but also to be transformed into an overcomer.

THE POSITION OF BEING AN OVERCOMER!

Revelation 3:21 states, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." The intimacy Jesus has with the Father is one in which we all partake. In this passage however, there is an indication of the *position* an overcomer has that is associated with this intimate relationship with Jesus.

The overcomer will have a position of authority and rulership. This position is granted because the overcomer knows his or her dependency on Jesus. The Shulammite woman in the Song of Songs knew her bridegroom. She had her bridegroom's ear and attention. Her heart and his were one. This intimacy and yielded obedience are reflected in our being an overcomer.

As I learn to overcome, I also learn how to move in the authority I have in Jesus. It is not an authority or power which is separate from Jesus but is one with His. But being

Please Pray With Us . . .

PRAYER

- Please keep **Josh Glaser** and **Bob Ragan** in prayer as they travel to Poland in April to conduct a week of training for local leaders starting a New Directions program.
- Please pray for **Jay Wilson** as he makes his Pilgrimage to Israel at the beginning of March.
- Pray that **Alan Medinger** and **Josh Glaser** will have a completed manuscript and a publisher for their book this year.

THANKSGIVING

- **Jay Wilson** would like to thank God for his 7 year apprenticeship at Hope Community Church is now complete! He will be ordained on March 30, 2008. Jay will also be graduating from college in May. Congratulations Jay!
- For the leadership of **Doris Gotcher** who served Regeneration as our Board President these past 6 years. Doris retired from the board in January.

For more information or in-depth monthly prayer requests,

E-mail info@RegenerationMinistries.org

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an overcomer here and now also influences future *positional* authority. There is a singleness of vision and heart present.

JUST STOP IT!

I recently viewed a comedy skit where a counselor met with individuals usually for 5 minutes. No matter what the condition was, always his two word advice was, "Stop it!" The client he was meeting with indicated several problem behaviors and his response always was to just stop it! As humorous as this skit was, there is a modicum of truth in it.



We all have the capacity within us to just stop whatever sinful activity we are doing. I am by *no means* ignoring the process of sanctification and receiving God's mercy and grace. However, because Jesus lives within me, I have the capacity to stop sinning (Romans 6:5-7, 1 John 2:1).

As one who overcomes, I have the power within me to choose life over death in each challenge I face. I have the power to reveal whom it is I am serving. Not only are my trials opportunities for me to overcome, but they also present the choice to not sin as I once did. Each trial presents me with an opportunity to just stop it!

As I grow in my capacity to be an overcomer, I grow in my capacity to just "stop it". My will is more empowered to stand in my true self, being one with Jesus, enabling me to take a stand in my true authority.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Twenty years ago my focus was on overcoming my same-sex attractions (SSA). My perspective was the SSA were the "real" life-limiting issue, the mountain I must conquer. As I deconstructed my SSA, the *real* issues surfaced which had nothing to do with homosexuality. The real issues were idolatry, envy, self-protection, self-hatred, narcissism...do I need to go on?

Men and women come to the Regeneration NoVA often focused on one particular form of life-dominating sin. Their life and perspective is seen only through this sin or its consequences. Just tell me what to do. Just give me the steps. Where's the checklist I need to fill out? It is important to examine and understand aspects of our particular struggle but this is only *part* of our sanctification process.

I must face and overcome each person or thing which sets itself up against the authority and position of Jesus in my heart. Either I lean into the Creator or I lean into the created. What I learn in overcoming one area of sin in my heart is really applicable to all areas of sin. The mountain which appears to be made of solid granite is really a mass of stones comprised of various sizes. I become a proficient mountain climber as I overcome one stone at a time, finally reaching the summit!

COMMITTED TO BEING AN OVERCOMER

I am still in the early stages of processing this new aspect in my walk. Perhaps you are already walking in the knowledge of what it means to be an overcomer. If not, my hope is perhaps to inspire you to read the seven letters contained in Revelation. Ask the Holy Spirit for insight on how to be one who is a true overcomer. Ask Him to give you the capacity to see the bigger picture so as not to have tunnel vision regarding your walk.

When you face your next trial may I suggest the following:

1. Shift your focus from the trial onto Jesus practicing His presence and thanking Him for being with you.
2. Acknowledge nothing catches Him by surprise and He already has a plan for you.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the means of how you can overcome this trial.
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower your will and for the courage to do what He indicates.
5. Thank Him for His faithful commitment to you. ■

Bob Ragan is the director of Regeneration of Northern Virginia. He has been an invited speaker across the US and in Europe, South America, and Asia.

Bob served on the Exodus International Board of Directors from 1996-2002 and was a past chairman. He was reelected to the board in 2007. Bob's testimony has been published twice in Charisma Magazine and has been referenced in several other publications. He can be reached at 703-591-HOPE.

MINISTRY NEWS

PLEASE JOIN US!

Regeneration's Baltimore Banquet

Friday April 11, 2008
6:30 PM

Towson, Maryland
Contact 410-661-0284 or

info@regenerationministries.org

Sign up to be a table host at the banquet!

Just commit to fill one (or more) table of 8 guests.

There is no financial commitment to be a table host.

Exodus Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference

April 4-6, 2008
Williamsburg, VA

Keynote Speaker: Pastor Ken Tombley

Special Guest: Mark Yarhouse

Worship Band: Jeanine Guidry and "Offering"

To register or for more information go to:

www.exodus.to/conferences

or call 888-264-0877

FINANCIAL COLUMN

Last fall, our Northern Virginia branch held an outreach dessert where we reached 200 people with real stories of how Jesus is transforming lives. Through your generous giving, you made a way for dessert guests to hear testimonies of how freedom from sexual sin is not only possible, *it's happening*.

Friday, April 11th is our Baltimore banquet, and we still need additional sponsors to make this event a success. Would you consider sponsoring a banquet table? Each table sponsorship is \$500. Our goals are:

- Fully fund the \$16,000 in banquet costs prior to the banquet (\$10,000 already raised)
- Fill 35 tables totaling 280 people (18 tables already hosted)
- Introduce 100 new guests to Christ's work through Regeneration for the first time
- Raise \$50,000 to further this ministry to men and women captive to sexual sin

Your sponsorship will enable us to open wide the banquet doors to nearly 300 people, guaranteeing again that all funds raised that evening go directly to ministry to men and women seeking freedom from sexual sin and brokenness. Thank you for your prayerful consideration!

Regeneration Is . . .

Staff Team

Joshua Glaser
Executive Director

Rev. Bob Ragan
Northern Virginia
Director

Jay Wilson
Baltimore Program
Coordinator

Ann Cohrs
NoVA Ministry
Associate

Devon Medinger
Staff 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)