

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer.” ~ Romans 12:12



Hope and Prayer

by Alan Medinger

Hope and prayer are almost inseparable. As Christians we pray for what we hope for, meaning that in a major way our hopes guide our prayers. This makes it important to look at our hopes as significant factors in our spiritual lives.

As Christians most of us have little difficulty with the *ultimate* hope: the victory of Christ over all evil and death,

His triumphant return and the eventual coming of His Kingdom on earth. But in the interim—the time in which all of us may have to live out our lives on this earth—hope is a more uncertain thing. In many of us, it tends to come and go.

Christians tend to think of hope as something you have or don't have. But it is more than that. For the Christian, hope is a virtue, one that we can nurture in ourselves to our own benefit and to the delight of God. What follows can apply to our total lives as Christians, but I am going to address hope specifically for the man or woman struggling with sexual sin or sexual

identity problems and for those who have loved ones living in sexual brokenness.

To begin, I think it is helpful to distinguish between hope and faith and trust. These are related qualities that all must bring joy to God as they reveal the way we relate to Him. For the purposes of this article, I'll be using faith, trust, and hope in these ways: Faith comes first. It is the belief in a Creator God. Trust comes next. It believes in God's character, His mercy, His love, His

absolute goodness. Hope comes last. It is the belief that God's good character will manifest itself in ways that are good for me and my loved ones.

Most Christians rarely falter in faith and trust, but hope is a more tenuous thing. When our hopes are unfulfilled over a long period of time, we can be tempted to abandon hope. Men and women who come to our ministry, who after years of struggle don't experience the kind of healing or change they were expecting, sometimes give up hope and go back into homosexuality. Parents who prayed for years for a son or daughter to leave the gay life may eventually give up hope (although I have to say this doesn't appear to happen that often).

It is important to recognize what hope is and what it is not. *Hope is a belief in the possibility of good things happening.* It is not a prediction of the future. Thus, most radical "faith" teaching—if you just believe it strongly enough, it will happen—is questionable. Two factors stand in the way of "faith" theology. One is the fact that God never overrides the free will of any individual. Therefore, your son or daughter must *choose* to seek

continued on page 2

When our hopes are unfulfilled over a long time, when we don't experience the kind of healing or change we were expecting, when the battle goes on and on, we can be tempted to abandon hope and go back into sexual sin. But we must hold to hope. Here's why.

Regeneration of Northern Virginia

Dessert Celebration

November 1, 2008

7:30 - 9:30 PM

Celebrating God's Power
to Transform Lives

Contact 703-591-HOPE to RSVP

God ahead of satisfying his or her sexual or emotional desires, or change will not likely happen.

The second impediment to the fulfillment of our hopes through “faith” is that what we hope for may not be the best God has for us. My wife went through ten years of a hellish marriage while I was living a secret homosexual life. At the same time, I was in turmoil over my increasing inability to control my life. All the while she prayed for a better marriage. I prayed for more self-control. God’s desire, on the other hand, was for my wife to let go of me, and for me to truly surrender my whole self to Him. It took years before either of these things happened. God had a far better plan for us than we had for ourselves.

In a practical sense we can have more hope or less hope. We are rational creatures (to some extent) so the odds of something happening or not happening will affect how hopeful we are regarding specific matters. When I was first diagnosed with leukemia last year, I had a small measure of hope that God would heal me. When I later found out it was the fairly non-aggressive chronic lymphocytic leukemia, I had a lot of hope that I would live a good many

years. The important thing is that in both instances I had some degree of hope, and so I continued to live my life as fully as I could, and I continued to look to God as my source of good things. A mustard seed of hope can be like a mustard seed of faith; God can do great things with it.

Hope doesn’t directly make things happen. Why then is it good to have hope, especially if there is a possibility that our hope will never be fulfilled? Why nurture in ourselves a hope that is merely acknowledgment that good *may* happen? There are a number of very important reasons to hold on to our hope:

1. Our hope pleases the Lord. It pleases Him because it is a practical expression of our belief in His Lordship, and a recognition of His character.

2. The alternatives are unacceptable. The alternatives to hope are despair and fatalism. Despair is a belief in the non-fulfillment of God’s good desires for us. Fatalism believes God is irrelevant or indifferent to what goes on in our lives.

3. Hope guides our prayers. We pray for things we hope for. Prayer is our conversation with God over specific matters, and over time in these conversations, God refines our hopes to bring them more in accord with His will. Thus a Christian man who prays for victory over lust might grow to sense that a better prayer might be that he become more and more a son who is pleasing to the Father. In our hopes expressed in prayer to God, He shows us His greater hopes for us and for our loved ones.

4. Hope keeps us persevering. In the familiar passage from Scripture, “*More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope*” (Romans 5:3-4), we are told that endurance or perseverance leads to hope. It works the other way around also. Holding on to hope motivates us to persevere.

5. Hope enables us to see the small steps that God is taking in our lives, and we are encouraged to build on those steps for a greater good. Without

continued on page 3

From the Mail-box to the In-box



Regeneration News is now available via e-mail! You can enjoy the same great content conveniently and privately in your e-mail in-box. There is no cost to you to sign up. In fact, by signing up you’ll be helping Regeneration save money!



So, if you have an e-mail account and prefer to have this newsletter sent to you there, just go to

www.RegenerationMinistries.org/newsletters.asp and submit your email address and you will be automatically added!

Hope and Prayer

continued from page 2

hope we might not see or appreciate those small steps that are a part of the bigger picture.

6. Hope keeps bringing us back to Jesus. He is the source of our hope and when hope falters, we are drawn back to Him.

False hopes can bring grief and despair, so it is important that to the best of our ability our hopes be in accordance with God’s will. What, therefore, is it we should hope and pray for? Of course, a simple answer is for God’s will to be done. However, I don’t believe such a broad prayer increases the intimacy God wants to have with us—it ignores our hearts and our humanity. I believe that our hopes and prayers should generally be specific, but in some way they need to relate to the restoration of our lives and of the world to their God-given, pre-fallen nature. Thus, we pray that those at risk of dying will live, that the sick will be healed, that wars will end and peace prevail, that those we love will become the men and women they were created to be. When I go beyond this—as when I pray that my children not face financial hardships—I have often later found that my prayers have veered from God’s will.

Because our hopes will not always be fulfilled in this lifetime, we need to balance our hopes for tomorrow with an acceptance of what is today. Although not always easy to do, it is possible. In seeking this balance, we hold onto our hopes, but we subordinate them to the Lordship of Jesus.

To have hope is a choice we can make. We live in a world that encourages passivity and looks to emotions as the powerful force guiding our lives. How often we say, “I feel” rather than “I think” and look at a feeling as something that just comes upon us with no choice or guidance from us. We tend to think of hopes as being like emotions. We simply have them or we don’t. But having hopes is a matter of the intellect and the will. Intellectually we certainly have evidence for hope; we have the knowledge of a Lord and Savior who brought us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Furthermore, many of us have seen Him act in our lives many times. Regarding the will, through the Spirit of God living in us we are free to choose to focus on God’s character working in our lives and in the lives of those we

love, or we are free not to. If you don’t believe me, decide to again hope for that on which you had given up hope, and see what happens.

You who struggle, don’t give up hope. Parents, spouses, don’t give up hope. We cannot be certain of outcomes, but we can be certain that only good can come out of our walking with God in hope. ■

Please Pray With Us . . .

THANKSGIVING

- Regeneration founder, **Alan Medinger**, has Graves’s disease and it has attacked the muscles controlling his eyes. Alan was suffering from severe double vision, but in response to healing prayer the condition has cleared up. Pray that this healing is sustained.
- Join us in thanking our volunteer leaders who dedicate so much of their time to helping our ministry! God is truly using them in a unique and enriching way.
- Thank the Lord for giving **Bob Ragan** the recent opportunity to ministry to men and women in Brazil! (*More information on this will be provided next month*).

PRAYER

- For God to provide us with the correct staff members to add to our ministry.
- For God’s provision for the ministry in our upcoming fiscal year.
- For those who need our programs, to find a way to contact us.
- For the healthy pregnancy of **Josh Glaser’s** wife **Jamie** and for our administrative assistant **Stacey Feehley**. Josh and Jamie are expecting their 4th child in December. Stacey and her husband Paul are expecting their 1st child in January.

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

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

SPORTS: Field of Valor

(A message to men)

Does a flying ball coming at you intimidate you? Do you throw from the elbow only to have the ball land 10 feet away? Do you know the crack of a bat when you have hit a ball?

For those of us in the trenches of working through our SSA struggles, even the mere mention of the word 'sports' has caused us to cringe, run in the other direction, or respond angrily to the person inviting us to watch the big game or to come out and play.

Yet God invites each of us to become a "mighty man of valor," and He doesn't just want to deal with our SSA temptations, He also wants to release healing and development into every area of our lives. Yes, even in the area of sports, where so many of us experienced fear, rejection, and humiliation while growing up.

For well over a year, a group of us has been returning to that intimidating sports' field together to let Christ heal and grow us. We're not the same as we were.

On September 13th at 1:00 p.m. we're having a **special event and we're inviting you, our brothers.** We'll be gathering to learn and to play softball. Our goals are to promote God's healing in a difficult area of our lives, encourage one another as we take risks, develop our abilities, and boost our self-confidence. All you need is a desire to grow in your relationship with Christ and a willingness to try.

Kevin, our leader, will cover the basic rules of the game; there will be exercises in catching, throwing, and batting. Time for questions is open throughout play, particularly when teachable moments occur. We do this each time we meet and especially when a new sport is introduced.

Sincerely,
Wayne

For information call 410-661-0284 or E-mail
info@RegenerationMinistries.org. To view Wayne's full
message, visit www.RegenerationMinistries.org.

Living Waters: Sexual & Relational Healing

Living Waters is an intensive, Christ-centered program for men and women seeking sexual and relational wholeness, particularly for those seeking freedom from homosexuality, sexual addictions, or past sexual abuse. Join us in Fairfax, VA or Baltimore, MD for this life-changing opportunity. For more information or to download an application call 703-591-4673 in Northern VA or 410-661-0284 in Baltimore or visit us on the web at www.RegenerationMinistries.org.

New Beginnings: Men's Sexual Purity Group

If you are seeking freedom from any kind of habitual sexual sin and want to grow in your relationship with Christ in this area of your life, we invite you to join New Beginnings. New Beginnings provides practical teaching, effective accountability, and real encouragement. A new wave of men are emerging, walking in freedom from lust, walking with freedom to love. Contact 410-661-0284 for more information. Past participants in need of a 'tune up' are encouraged to contact us!

Regeneration Is . . .

Staff Team

Joshua Glaser
Executive Director

Rev. Bob Ragan
Northern Virginia
Director

Rev. Samuel J. 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)
- Just for Wives
- Field of Valor

Northern, VA

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