

*Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
~Psalm 51:10*



The Intentional Choices of Sexual Purity

by Rev. Bob Ragan

Sexual purity is an archaic term in our culture, a fluid concept that is open to personal interpretation. For Christians, sexual purity must be an intentional lifestyle choice. Being sexually pure requires my commitment to make it a forethought rather than afterthought as we choose purity, choose to be chaste, *before* we find ourselves in the throes of temptation. Sexual purity is a state of mind, much like walking in a state of forgiveness. We must commit each day to this reality.

In this article I will discuss three areas which I believe are required for us to be men and women of sexual integrity. These areas were derived through my personal observation and the embracing of them in my life.

Be intentional to identify sexual sin

In the movie “The Matrix” the main character Neo is offered two pills: if he takes the blue pill it will place him in a state of blissful ignorance; the red pill he is offered will awaken him to life and reality. Jesus asks us to take the “red pill.” He who is the truth desires we have truth in our inward parts as David writes in Psalm 51. Embracing sexual purity requires us to walk in an *awakened* reality.

Our culture believes we cannot happily exist or be fulfilled unless we are sexually active. Sexual activity outside of biblical parameters is seen as normative and even necessary. Thus, believing sex is a necessity results in the lessening of our capacity to identify these sexual behaviors as sinful or even addictive. Church denominations that accept these societal norms diminish biblical guidelines as merely personal choices rather than assertions of truth.

We need to take the red pill and be awakened out of our worldly illusions. We must intentionally be scripturally uncompromised regarding the issue of sexual purity. Without this foundation we are at the mercy of our feelings, secular norms, and the embracing of “sloppy agape.” Culturally God’s agape love is erroneously interpreted as love without boundaries; we can create God in our own image according to our desires. Without a scriptural foundation we will fail to discern God’s original design for the healthy expression of our sexuality.

When we grow in intimacy with God, it will help create healthy intimacy with others.

Be intentional to have a supernaturally changed heart

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus indicates being pure in heart will result in our capacity to see God. Purity is not just a cognitive concept but a joint reality continually chosen and *embraced with* the heart. In Matthew 15:11, 18-20 Jesus states that what makes us unclean comes from our heart. Embracing sexual purity involves the deep places of the heart.

In our hearts we carry unresolved emotions and wounds from our past and our inability to process these issues impacts our capacity to make wise behavioral choices and may create vulnerability for sinful ones. The true goal of sexual purity is not found in outward, behavior modification but in our “inward parts.” Tim Keller, a Presbyterian pastor, teaches God’s desire for us is to have supernaturally changed hearts rather than ones which are morally restrained.

Embracing sexual purity means we see it as a virtue, a desirable quality of great worth. The red pill destroys the illusion that motivation for Christian virtues is merely for behavioral modification rather than for awakening

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deep, God-given desires in the heart. Seeking only cognitive understanding of our issues devalues and ignores the heart. Being cut off from our hearts keeps our focus on outward control. God desires we know sexual purity as an ecstatic freedom found *in* the heart.

Entering into this process means we begin to discover our susceptibilities to impurity and then share this knowledge with others who can help us. However, this sharing often does not happen. Due to numerous reasons, particularly shame, we isolate ourselves rather than reach out. All too often these isolated individuals come to see me when their world is collapsing around them. We must take off our masks and express our need of one another; we need to enter into personal accountability.

The bedrock of accountability is a willingness to commit to honesty, transparency, vulnerability, and the Lordship of Jesus.

Please Pray With Us . . .

PRAY FOR:

- ◆ Wisdom for the Regeneration Board in knowing when to step out in faith, and when to move with caution in approving new additions to our staff.
- ◆ For the Baltimore Living Waters participants and also for the participants of the Baltimore men's sexual purity program, Rescue (formerly New Beginnings). Please pray that their hearts would be open to Christ's healing work.
- ◆ Continued deepening of work the Lord is doing in our NoVA Living Waters participants.

We THANK GOD FOR:

- ◆ His provision of **Peter Mitchell** to our staff team in Northern Virginia, and for the many opportunities opening to us there.
- ◆ Providing opportunities to speak and teach in the community, outside of Regeneration's regular programs
- ◆ The exiting changes that are happening in the lives and hearts of the participants of the Baltimore Living Waters, Rescue, and Just for Wives programs. We also thank God for the changes happening in the hearts of the participants in Northern Virginia's new CrossCurrent program.

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

However, a common misconception regarding accountability is that we can lay the responsibility solely on others to hold us accountable. The red pill reality of accountability is that we must choose to make ourselves *accountable to them*. A supernaturally changed heart is one which is willingly transparent *before* it is required. We must make the humble, adult choice not to force others to make us transparent!

The true goal of accountability relationships is found in I Thessalonians 5:11: "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." The bottom line goal is to encourage each other to become the person God created us to be. We must support one another to continually have supernaturally changed hearts and affirm the expression of God's true nature within us.

Be intentional to seek healthy intimacy

Walking in sexual purity requires us to experience healthy, relational intimacy. Our sexually saturated culture automatically associates the word "intimacy" with sex. But sexual intimacy is only one of many forms of intimacy. We need to be continually experiencing healthy intimacy with one another and God if we desire to walk in integrity.

The word "intimacy" can be phonetically pronounced as "into me see". Adam's original aloneness in the garden existed because he lacked relational intimacy with someone who was just like him, a body person. Prior to the fall, Adam had no fear of his inner soul being seen by another. He was unashamed to stand naked before God, both outwardly and inwardly. The only mirror Adam had to see his reflection was the mirror he saw in the eyes of his Creator. God's creation of Eve was so Adam could gaze into another like himself which would be received and returned back to him. In so doing, Adam's aloneness was met.

Adam and Eve were brother and sister *before* they were husband and wife. The initial attraction between Adam and Eve was not merely due to the good of their physical sexuality, but also due to their complementarity. Not only did they see their own uniqueness from the rest of creation but also their *shared humanity*. In our shared humanity we see one another and acknowledge our need to be known in healthy, non-sexual intimate ways. Our aloneness will not be so acutely felt, thereby lessening the drive towards false sources of intimacy.

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We must discern unhealthy associations and attachments we have made in our search for true intimacy. Attaching the legitimate need for intimacy to sexual behaviors creates false intimacy and major strongholds. The red pill allows the Holy Spirit to expose these wrong attachments and help us to seek legitimate, life-giving intimacy.

Be intentional in pursuing God

To overcome our desire for lesser things, we must replace it with desire for that which is greater. This greater desire is already at the very core of our being: the desire to know and be known by God and others. Embracing purity means we need to be intentional in allowing this core desire to be released within us. When we grow in intimacy with God, it will help create healthy intimacy with others. Acknowledging our need to know and be known is the beginning of embracing true intimacy and sexual integrity.

Intimacy with God requires we know Him in all three of His personal manifestations. For us to become the men and women God created us to be we must allow Jesus to take us to the Father. The Holy Spirit is not a dove or a power outlet we plug into but He is an actual Person. Ask the Holy Spirit to invite you into the holy dance of the Trinity. Through the Cross Jesus has made a way for you to enter.

Healthy intimacy is built in community requiring that we enter into *holy communion* with one another. We come out of isolation and align our desires to connect in healthy, intimate ways. We make a commitment to be known by God and others.

Our passions must be lined up with God's passions. This will motivate us to embrace bodily self-control, allowing us to grow in holiness and be men & women of honor. Self-control requires two choices: not to act in one way and choosing to act in another! Self-control, perseverance, and purity are all rooted in the choices we make with our will. Our wills need to be submitted to the Cross of Jesus, being empowered by the Holy Spirit's strength. For us to walk in sexual purity we must, with an act of our wills, make it an ongoing chosen lifestyle.

Walking in sexual purity means we will be intentional in our pursuit of God. We will be intentional in the building of relationship with Him and others. We will choose to no longer ignore the unresolved issues of our past, being able to acknowledge our pain and broken dreams. We actively choose to come out of isolation, taking off our superficial masks to develop transparent, open friendships. Acknowledging our need for healthy intimacy will make us less vulnerable or open to sources of false intimacy.

Ask God to awaken the sleeper within you. Invite the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Let Jesus be the true motivation in your inner core so your heart is supernaturally changed through His Presence. It is He who *wills* you to make the necessary, intentional choices needed. God has begun a good work in you and He will bring it to completion! ■

EXODUS INTERNATIONAL FREEDOM CONFERENCE

The 2009 Exodus International Freedom Conference will take place in Wheaton, Illinois from July 14th through July 18th. The purpose of this conference is to provide help for those who struggle personally with homosexuality and ministry support for those who have a loved one who struggles with or embraces homosexuality.

The conference is also an opportunity for ministry leaders, pastors, and counselors to learn more about how to minister to God's truth, grace, and justice to a world impacted by homosexuality.

Be an early bird and receive an additional \$30 off by completing the registration before March 31st. Discounts are also available for married couples (each must register separately) and students.

For more information or to register, visit www.exodusfreedom.org or call toll free (888)-264-0877.

MINISTRY NEWS

CHOOSE LIFE CONFERENCE

For those of you, who have enjoyed the Exodus Mid-Atlantic Regional conferences in the past, consider attending the upcoming “*Choose Life*” conference! Choose Life Conference 2009, hosted by Sought Out, Set Free, and Greater Hope Ministries, will be held on April 17-18 at the LivingStone Monastery in beautiful Newport News, Virginia.

Join guest speaker **Bob Perdue**, from Life Now Ministries and President of the Board of Directors of Regeneration, as he presents his book “*10 Life Choices*.” Explore how the author’s own choice to find and follow Jesus helped him overcome abuse, addiction, depression, and attempted suicide.

Learn how choosing Jesus can help you overcome your struggles and “recover the life you were always meant to live.” The registration cost includes registration and conference fees, book and materials, lunch on Saturday, and morning coffee hour.

For more information or to register, visit www.chooselife2009.eventbrite.com.

S.A.L.T. FOR MEN

S.A.L.T., a Christ-centered support group for all men (single or married) with sexual struggles will meet in Northern Virginia Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 10:00 p.m. from March 27 to September 9, 2009. To obtain the required application or additional information, please call the Northern Virginia office at 703-591-HOPE (4673).

WOMEN’S GROUP

A Women’s group will be starting in the summer. If you are interested in joining, please contact the Northern Virginia office for more information. Phone: 703-591-4673

RESCUE

The third quarter of Rescue will meet in Baltimore, Maryland Tuesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. from April 14 to June 23, 2009.

We will be delving into the topic “Living in Reality-Escaping the Matrix of Sexual Addiction.”

New and current participants are invited to enroll. Please call the Baltimore office at 410-661-0284 to obtain the required enrollment application.

Regeneration Is . . .

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Baltimore, MD

- Living Waters
- Rescue
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- New Directions
- Just for Wives

Northern, VA

- Living Waters
- Women’s Group
- Wives’ Group
- Men’s Group
- s.a.l.t.
(Sexual Addiction Group)