

But whatever was to my profit
I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.
~ Philippians 3: 7



NEWS Regeneration

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The Will to Believe, the Will to Feel

by Alan Medinger

Five years ago I wrote an article for *Regeneration News* entitled “Our Secret Weapon: The Will” (May 2004). In the years following, I have become even more convinced that our will is a magnificent but grossly undervalued gift in our battle to become more and more Christlike.

In the article I stressed how in a feeling, materialistic society we have been taught to ignore the will. We’re told that feelings do, or should, guide us, and that in the final analysis our behavior is determined by our genes and our past experiences. To many people, free will has come to be seen as a Christian or a Judeo-Christian concept. Indeed, in opposing the nihilistic modern or post-modern thinking around us, we often find ourselves standing against the tide when we declare that man indeed has a free will and is accountable for his actions.

I believe that our having a free will is one of the characteristics that makes us “in the image of God.” It sets us apart from all of His other creatures. In a way having a free will is other worldly; it does not fit into the framework of causes and effects that seems to govern everything else round us. The fact that we make choices makes us feel like we have a free will.

Ultimately, however, we take the concept of a free will on faith, and we live accordingly. I might add that in doing so we are able to live vastly better lives than people who live believing they have no say in their destiny. Imagine what your thinking, aspirations, hopes, and relationships would be like if you were totally programmed by your genes and your past experiences. You would not be very different from your dog—although maybe not as nice.

In the 2004 article I focused on the power of the will to affect our behavior. We *decide* to stop masturbating or using pornography, and often things start to change. I wrote, “One reason we don’t choose or decide is because we fear we will not be able to live up to the choice we have made. We see ourselves promising something to God and then failing to keep our promise. But we are letting the weakness of our will in *doing* keep us from using our will in *deciding*. On the other hand, once we *decide* for righteousness, we put ourselves on the side of God, and He is there to help us *do*.”

I am bringing the subject up again because in the past five years I have become more and more impressed with how powerful the will can be in changing not only our behavior, but in changing factors that we seldom relate to the will: what we *believe* and how we *feel*. And because our beliefs and our feelings have a huge influence on how we behave, this is a worthy subject to be considered here.

**Don't just say
God can change me
or God can heal me.
Of course he can.
Choose to believe that
he will change or
heal you.**

WHAT WE BELIEVE

To a great extent, we believe what we want to believe. This statement runs smack dab into the way most of us pridefully view ourselves; we think we are totally objective. We weigh the evidence before us and come to a sound, logical conclusion. Don’t we?

If you think this is the way people establish their beliefs, perhaps you don’t follow politics. Let me give you a couple of examples. People who detested President George W. Bush believed that he lied concerning weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. People who thought he was an honorable man believed that he was misled by bad intelligence work. Each side *chose* to believe what supported their emotional feelings about the man. Many of you may remember the Supreme Court confirmation

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hearings for Clarence Thomas. A former co-worker, Anita Hill, came forward and accused him of lewd behavior. Clarence Thomas denied it. Every conservative I talked to believed Clarence Thomas, and every liberal believed Anita Hill. Both sides heard the very same evidence and came to different conclusions that were in line with what they wanted to believe. In both of these situations I don't think everyone took a stand in order to buttress their arguments. Rather, they actually believed what they were saying.

The matter of choosing to believe has become quite significant to me in the past couple of years. Two years ago, when I was first diagnosed with leukemia, I sensed the Lord saying to me that I would live ten more years, and I would complete three more books—the one I was writing and two more. Now, I know I don't always hear God correctly, and I know that I am not above transferring my wishful thinking into “a word from the Lord” or that some sort of defense mechanism might be at work in me. But I have *chosen* to believe that this is His word to me. Whenever I have prayed about it, I sensed Him still saying, “Believe it.” So, I have chosen to believe it and I am living my life accordingly.

Choose to believe that God will give you a victory over the prevailing sin that has hung on for so long. Choose to believe that you will one day be healed to the extent that marriage is possible for you. Don't just say God *can* change me or God *can* heal me. Of course he can. Choose to believe that he *will* change or heal you.

This may sound something like the “positive confession” teaching that was popular some years ago. I think it is more. This is not a magic formula—believe it and it will happen. To believe that good things will happen is to have hope, and hope is a Christian virtue. Our hopes as Christians are based on God's goodness, and mercy, His kindness towards us, and His infinite power to change our lives.

To choose to believe that good things will happen—that is to have hope—can bring a number of possible blessings:

1. It can open us to the possibility that the good thing *will* happen. In contrast, if we believe that we will never be healed, healing is unlikely to come.
2. It can motivate us to take the steps that we can take to make it happen. Healing is most often a joint effort between us and God.
3. It is an exercise in believing that we serve a God who is loving and merciful and desires the best for us.

If we choose to believe that the good will happen, we may still entertain the possibility that it won't. That's okay. We are rational people and our hopes are not the same thing as predictions. I know that my belief might be wrong, that I might not live eight more years, but then I can say as Job did in chapter 13 verse 15, *Though He slay me, I will hope in Him*. You choose to believe that God will bring you victory over your homosexuality, but if he doesn't _____. Fill in the blank. In completing that sentence, you will have taken a great step in surrender to the Lord, a step you might not have taken had you not first chosen to believe.

WHAT WE FEEL

There are quite a number of places in Scripture where we are told to change our feelings: *Husbands, love your wives* (Ephesians 5:25), *Let not the sun go down on your anger* (Ephesians 4:26), and *do not be anxious* (Matthew 6:34). Love, anger, anxiety; all are feelings or feeling related. God is telling us to change these feelings, something He would not tell us to do if it were not possible.

What is the first step in changing these feelings? We decide—we choose—to change them. It is easy to picture

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Please Pray With Us . . .

PRAY FOR:

- Willa Medinger who had a massive stroke on June 15th (visit www.carepages.com to register to post messages and view updates about Willa's health).
- Please pray for God's continued financial provision through the summer and for faith & courage for those He calls to give.
- For the staff attending the Exodus Conference in July, as they both minister to conference attendees and receive further equipping for themselves.
- For the leaders and participants in our summer programs. Summer & family demands can affect commitment.
- The Lord's help pulling together ministry teams for fall programs and for those He wants to take the programs.

WE THANK GOD FOR:

- The successful completion of the 2008-2009 Living Waters program in Northern Virginia. Many participants came away with a profoundly deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.
- A reduction in the white blood cell count of **Alan Medinger** during his June blood test.
- **Jamie Glaser** who joined our Baltimore office in May as a part-time Woman's Ministry Associate
- The rejuvenation of **Bob Ragan** after completing a month long sabbatical.

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

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a little child saying, “I don’t feel like doing it,” and believing that should settle the matter. But how many of us adults are still operating on that principle? Or more likely, how many of us allow feelings to block changes in behavior?

The ability of the will to overcome and redirect feelings has been clearest to me in the matter of loving someone. A number of times I have felt the Lord call me to love someone whom I really didn’t like very much. I have been obedient and made the decision to love them, and more often than not, it has come to pass.

We have the idea that feelings just are, that we can’t do anything about them. Most of the time this is not the case. We may have to work to change them, as with my coming to love people I didn’t like. In my situation the work was comprised of looking for positive qualities in the person, and intentionally putting out of my mind the things about them that irritate me. My decision to love was like changing the filter in my mind; good things got through and bad things were blocked out. The result: I started to love them

Fear is another emotion we can decide to replace by “changing our filter.” We silence the negative thoughts and we intentionally turn to the good, such as the fact that God wants the best for us or that He promises never to abandon us. Many people come to our ministry under the heavy burden of negative emotions such as hopelessness, loneliness, shame or fear. These feelings weigh them down and stifle their growth. Often they are pervasive and will

not be changed easily. But letting go of them starts with the will, making the decision to let them go and choosing to replace them with feelings that are life giving. Having made the decision, we start to act according to the new way we have decided to feel. For example, a woman who has a fear of men decides that she is no longer going to fear them. This is apt to lead her to intentionally walk into situations (quite safe ones at first) where she will be with men.

In some situations self-pity or inordinate self-protection is a factor fueling the negative feelings. Anger can feel good or it can give us a justification for our selfishness. Fear can keep us in the comfort zone of our childishness. The decision to let go of a negative feeling may have to be preceded by a time of self-reflection and repentance.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As human beings we have free wills. As Christian believers, we have the Holy Spirit living in us. The “willpower” of the Christian is not rooted in our strength or character alone. It is enhanced by the Spirit of God to enable us to do what we could not do without Christ.

Among the fruits of the Spirit, the last one mentioned is self-control. This confirms that God’s Spirit in us can enable us to do what we could not do before. Our free will is strengthened for good. We can choose to believe, and we can choose to feel that which brings healing and growth and freedom to us. In doing so, we are able to take hold of a hope that will not disappoint us. ■

Update on Alan's Health

Dear Friends,

As background; I was diagnosed with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia about two years ago. This is usually a slow moving form of leukemia, and in the words of my Johns Hopkins oncologist: “You will probably die with it, not from it.” The first year went pretty well with no significant problems. Then last summer, I started to lose weight and was feeling tired and weak. I was starting to get colds, bronchitis, etc., and they would hang on for weeks. Also I was having a lot of pains in my bones. A test showed that my white cell count, the primary measure of the severity of leukemia, had increased considerably. The doctor put me on a mild chemotherapy.

Within three weeks, I had developed pneumonia, a blood infection and other problems. I was hospitalized and started to experience kidney failure and internal bleeding. I was in the hospital for 28 days. Finally, sick and tired of being in the hospital, I insisted on being sent home, even though the bleeding and other symptoms had not cleared up.

A major reason I decided to come home was that I wanted to go to church. I hadn’t been to church for 7 weeks, and this particular Sunday was a special one at our church--our new bishop would be visiting. I remember on Saturday I was still bleeding; I’m not sure about Sunday. Just before receiving communion at our church, we say the prayer, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive You, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” When I said that prayer on that Sunday, I felt I was being healed. The bleeding stopped. I am not sure this was a miracle, but it well might have been.

Since getting out of the hospital in November, my weakness and pains have ebbed and flowed, but I have not been further bothered by colds or other infections. In June 2009, I had a blood test and received pretty good news. My white cell count had gone down from 99,000 to 86,000; not as big a reduction as I had expected considering how good I feel, but, it was down. Incidentally, 11,000 is the normal range high, and I was at 20,000 when I was first diagnosed.

However, that’s only a part of the story! God, not “nature” rules what will happen.

[To read part 2 of Alan’s letter, please visit us online at www.RegenerationMinistries.org](http://www.RegenerationMinistries.org)

MINISTRY NEWS

LIVING WATERS

Anyone struggling to overcome relational or sexual issues, such as pornography, promiscuity, sexual addiction, homosexuality, codependency, and past sexual abuse is eligible to apply for the *Living Waters* program.

Regeneration is now accepting applications for the 2009-2010 *Living Waters* program. Please contact the Baltimore office at 410-661-0284 or the Northern Virginia office at 703-591-4673 for more information or to apply.

LW Baltimore begins October 8, 2009

LW Northern Virginia begins September 24, 2009

RESCUE

The next session of *Rescue* (men's sexual purity program) will meet in Baltimore, Tuesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 from **July 21 to September 22, 2009**. New, current, and past participants are invited to enroll. Please call the Baltimore office at 410-661-0284 to obtain the required enrollment application.

CROSSCURRENT

CrossCurrent, a Christ-centered support group for men who struggle with same-sex attraction, will meet in Northern Virginia Monday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. from **July 27 to September 21, 2009**. If you would like more information, please call or e-mail **Peter** at the Northern Virginia office. Phone: (703)-591-4673 Email: Peter@RegenerationMinistries.org.

EXODUS INTERNATIONAL FREEDOM CONFERENCE

Act fast! Registration is still available for the 2009 Exodus Freedom Conference in Wheaton, Illinois from **July 14 through July 18th**. Please don't miss this incredible opportunity to learn more about God's truth, grace, and justice towards a world impacted by homosexuality.

Discounts are 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.



FINANCIAL NEWS

In July, Regeneration will be sending five ministry staff members to the Exodus International Freedom Conference in Wheaton, Illinois. The staff will be engaged in leading workshops, furthering their own training, and serving on the prayer team. The total cost of the trip will be \$3500.00. Please consider contributing either prayerfully or monetarily to help cover the costs of this trip.

Welcome Jamie Glaser!

Jamie Glaser joined our Baltimore staff in late May as a part-time Women's Ministry Associate. In addition to being Josh's wife and being around the ministry for the past ten years, she is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW-C) and has been practicing off and on for the past ten years. She will be meeting with women one day a week. The other days of the week she will be home taking care of the Glaser's four children.

Regeneration Is . . .

Staff Team

Joshua Glaser
Executive Director

Rev. Bob Ragan
Northern Virginia
Director

The Rev. Peter Mitchell
Coordinator of Men's Ministry
(NoVA)

Ann Cohrs
Ministry Associate (NoVA)

Jamie Glaser
Women's Ministry Associate
(Baltimore)

Devon Medinger
Staff Accountant

Cheryl Durgin
Administrative Assistant

Alan Medinger
Founder

Groups and Programs

Baltimore, MD

- Living Waters
- Rescue
(Sexual Purity Group)
- New Directions
- Just for Wives

Northern, VA

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

