

*"For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God."  
~1 Peter 2:15-16*



## Choosing Christ without Demanding Change

by Josh Glaser

Sexual sin has been tenacious in my life. I remember my very first night at a Regeneration gathering—sharing that I wanted to “get in, get better, and get out because I have work to do for the Lord.” I had no idea how deeply my sexual sin ran, and I had no idea how long freedom would take.

We live in a consumer-driven culture, and as such our mindset about nearly everything is from the perspective of being consumers: What does this offer me? Is this a good deal for my money (or time, or energy, etc.)? What do I get out of this? If we don't like this show, we turn the channel. If we don't like our neighbors, we build a fence. If we don't like the pastor's preaching, we find a new church.

But pursuing sexual wholeness is a journey, and a long one at that. This doesn't fit well into our *what does this offer me* mindset.

Sexual sin is not the next door neighbor of sexual purity, addiction is not the neighbor of freedom, and brokenness is not the neighbor of wholeness. Moving from one to the other can be a lengthy trek. When the Jews escaped Egypt, they were not yet home. They were free, but they weren't free like those who have a home are free. In fact, they longed at times to return to slavery in Egypt—it felt more familiar and more secure to them than following God.

In between where we were and where we're headed we encounter desert, waiting, battle, hunger, and pain. Sometimes these are in the form of powerful and soothing temptations: *I can't resist this forever, he/she understands me like nobody else does, I'll just give*

*in this one last time so I can get some sleep, or No one will find out.* Sometimes these are in the form of vast amounts of space once filled with the excitement and pleasure of our sin. And sometimes these are in the form of new challenges—areas of growth we never dared walk through before—perhaps in the area of our relationships, or how we see our pasts, or how we take responsibility for our lives.

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An added challenge are the many voices around us saying that if we're experiencing desert it means we're on the wrong track. They beckon us back into slavery, saying pornography doesn't hurt anyone, some marriages simply don't work, homosexual men and women cannot change, all of this sexual purity stuff is antiquated and repressive. We must hold to One stronger than the voices around us.

### OBEYING WITHOUT CONDITION

In the book of Daniel when three Jewish boys were given the choice by king Nebuchadnezzar to worship a false god or be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, they responded:

O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16 – 18, NAS)

These three boys had been stripped of their home and taken into captivity in Babylon. They were stripped of

*continued on page 2*

## Choosing Christ

*continued from page 1*

their Hebrew names (Hananiah means *YAHWEH is gracious*, Mishael means *Who is like God*, and Azariah means *YAHWEH has helped*) and given Babylonian names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (meaning Command of Aku [Babylonian moon god], Who is like Aku, and Servant of Nebo [Babylonian god of wisdom], respectively). But when given the choice to bow under pressure to another god, they said no. Who would have blamed them if they had bowed? After all, they would have only been assenting outwardly; inwardly they would have remained believers in the one true God, right?

They lead the charge for us. They submitted themselves (including their bodies) to obedience whatever the cost, no matter how God pulled through for them. Like them, we choose obedience to Christ no matter what, however foolish our choice appears to the world around us. And like Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, we do not need to give an answer concerning this matter when voices around us tempt us to give in.

Our obedience is not based on what we expect Him to do for us. Too many have forsaken following Christ when they did not receive from Him what they expected when they expected it. This is an attitude of entitlement, a consumer mentality.

### Please Pray With Us . . .

#### PRAY FOR:

- The health of **Alan and Willa Medinger**.
- The health of **Bob Perdue**, Board President who is struggling to overcome swine flu.
- Financial stability as we approach the winter months.
- The new sessions of Rescue and Crosscurrent beginning in January.

#### We THANK GOD FOR:

- The marvelous beginning to the Northern Virginia and Baltimore *Living Waters* programs as well as Baltimore's men's sexual purity group, *Rescue*.
- The churches, families, and individuals who give so graciously to Regeneration through their time, money, and prayers.
- Our volunteer leaders who dedicate so much of their time to helping our ministry.

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

Our first question is not whether or not we will choose to change our behaviors or attractions or temptations, but whether or not we will choose Christ.

I remember talking with Jeff Johnston (who was on our staff for several years) after yet another sexual fall. I was discouraged and questioning whether or not I'd ever be able to walk in consistent freedom. He responded, "Well, what are you going to do, give up?" It was a clarifying question for me—the choice was that clear: continue to pursue Christ and His healing or forsake Him and give my life over to sexual sin. I knew what I wanted to do.

### OFFERING OUR SMALL 'YES'

Once we've decided we are going to pursue Christ no matter what, most of us still face the daily battle with sexual urges and desires that do not match up with this decision. And if we end up returning to our sin, we question our sincerity.

After defeat, it's common for men and women to respond by making a 'big decision' to overcome all over again. They rededicate their lives to Christ or 'repent' more fervently. There were times for me when I wondered whether or not I was really a Christian; I've met many who wrestle with this based on repeated defeats with sin.

For ten years of my sexual addiction, into the first few years of recovery, it seemed I could not say no to certain temptations. I didn't want to admit this to myself at first—it was humiliating, frightening, and it didn't fit too well with my understanding at the time of how my Christian life was supposed to be going. But time and time again, my actions showed me this was true.

Though the 'big decision' to follow Christ with one's sexuality has been made, our wills aren't yet big enough to handle the big decision. Our wills have become weakened with every yes to sin, and they seem to be powerless to say no" when temptation comes. When we hear the justification "This will be the last time," deep down we know it's not true. Giving in this time makes our wills even less able to refuse sin next time, less willing to say yes to God.

Here it can be helpful to start with smaller decisions, smaller yes's to God. As Jesus said to the Pharisees at the beginning of His ministry, "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matthew 3:8). We do this initially by offering what we can to keep with repentance, not what we can't. Later in Matthew, Jesus says that if your hand, foot, or eye causes

*continued on page 3*

## Choosing Christ

*continued from page 2*

you to stumble, to cut it off or pluck it out (Matthew 18:8, 9). He makes this personal. He doesn't say someone else ought to cut off our hand if they see it's causing us to sin. Why not? Because He is after more than just outward obedience, He is after our hearts as well, and avoiding those things that cause us to stumble is an act, however small, that comes from our hearts.

An interesting thing happens for those who commit to follow Christ no matter what, taking small but definitive steps to walk out that commitment — they change.

If your behavior has shown that you cannot refrain from looking at pornography on-line, you can't say no to his/her advances, or you can't stop calling the chat line for sex, then perhaps these yeses are too big for your will right now. This isn't an excuse because you can offer your smaller 'yes' to God: install a good Internet filter (or get rid of your computer), make it your decision

to never be alone with him/her so his/her advances won't come your way, have the phone company block the chat line number so you can't call. These are just examples of some smaller yes's. There are so many more.

Early in my journey, I had to take a number of steps like these: I had a roommate hold my credit cards so I couldn't use them to buy pornography; I had certain phone number prefixes blocked on my phone; and I committed to weekly participation in a support group and daily phone calls to an accountability partner. I've known others who have given up driving to and from work, others who chose never to go to certain parts of town, some who sent out e-mails to past lovers telling them politely but firmly to never contact them again.

A small yes offered to God is no small thing. We begin where we are; we cannot begin where we aren't. And the small yes helps build our will to be able to offer a larger yes along with more and more of ourselves—heart, soul, mind, and body—to God. And as Dallas Willard puts it in *Renovation of the Heart*, God “is sensitive to the slightest move of the heart toward Him.”

## CONSECRATION TO GOD

An interesting thing happens for those who commit to follow Christ no matter what, taking small but definitive steps to walk out that commitment — they change. Frequently, the change starts somewhere differently than they'd imagined. The late John White, in his book *Eros Redeemed* discusses how God's priorities for changing us are often not the same as our own. He likens it to when a person is brought into the hospital with critical wounds—the triage doctors and nurses have to decide what is most vital and where they will begin focusing their efforts.

Over the years, some who have come to our ministry came wanting their same-sex attractions to go away, or to have their marriage restored, or to find freedom from habitual sexual sin, or to no longer bend into other men or women. Instead they found that God began working in a different area of their lives: helping them to renounce self-hatred; calling them to put down their masks of “good Christian”; gently inviting them to face the abuse of their past with Him; bidding them to forsake pride and isolation. There have been a myriad of issues where God has been at work.

Yes, the journey God has for you will lead to victories along the way, and so sometimes there is great joy! But your journey may also lead to an empty place, a desert, just like it did for the Jewish people so many years ago. In Gerald May's book *Addiction and Grace*, he writes:

Consecration means dedication to God. It occurs when we claim our deepest desire for God, beneath, above, and beyond all things. Everything we do involves some kind of dedication. When we simply try to reform a troublesome addiction, our struggle is dedicated to minimizing the pain that addiction causes us and others. But in consecration we dedicate our struggle to something more; consecration is our assent to God's transforming grace, our commitment homeward.

When we consecrate this journey to God, everything takes on new meaning. Our victories and our failures alike become opportunities to revel in God's grace; resisting temptation and leaving a desire unmet become acts of worship; the objects of our temptation become those we fight for not against; and the journey itself—however long it takes and no matter how outwardly successful it may or may not seem—becomes a journey between Father and child. ■

## MINISTRY NEWS

### RESCUE:

#### MEN'S SEXUAL PURITY GROUP

*Rescue* will meet in Baltimore, **Tuesday evenings, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. from January 5 to March 23, 2010.** 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: SAME SEX ATTRACTION SUPPORT GROUP

*Crosscurrent*, a Christ-centered support group for men 18 years of age or older who struggle with same-sex attraction, will meet in Northern Virginia **Monday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. from January 11 to March 1, 2010.** CrossCurrent is "open," which means there is no formal process of application. Individuals may come for any one or more of the eight weekly meeting. If you would like more information, please call or e-mail Peter at the Northern Virginia office. Phone: 703-591-4673. E-mail: [Peter@RegenerationMinistries.org](mailto:Peter@RegenerationMinistries.org).

#### S.A.L.T. (Coming Summer of 2010)

S.A.L.T., a 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 May 19 to September 1, 2010.** To obtain the required application or additional information, please call the Northern Virginia office at 703-591-HOPE (4673).

#### WIVES GROUP

Baltimore's *Just for Wives* is for women whose husbands struggle with sexual sin. Meetings take place on the **first and third Mondays of each month at 7:00 p.m.** Please call the office at 410-661-0284 to for more details and to register.

#### ALAN MEDINGER'S HEALTH UPDATE

Alan Medinger was hospitalized in November for complications (double pneumonia, kidney/liver failure) as a result of contracting the H1N1 virus with an already compromised immune system (from Leukemia). Alan is responding to treatment and his prognosis improves each day. Please pray that the Lord will help Alan regain his strength. Also, please pray for the Medinger family; that the Lord will help work out the logistics of caring for both Alan and Willa. To register to postmessages and view updates about Alan or Willa's health, please visit [www.carepages.com](http://www.carepages.com).

## Regeneration Is . . .

#### Staff Team

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(NoVA)

**Ann Cohrs**  
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**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)