

March/April 2010

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.
2 Corinthians 1:3-4*



Trustworthy and Trusted

by Josh Glaser

When a husband is unfaithful to his wife, it can be devastating. Whether the unfaithfulness comes in the form of an adulterous encounter with another woman, homosexual liaisons, an emotional romance with a co-worker, or pornography on the Internet, for a wife, a discovery along these lines can be like a bomb that has detonated in the middle of the house—she is bleeding, her ears are ringing and her eyes are stinging; she is crawling, scrambling to find something, *anything*, solid to hold on to.

This article is primarily written to husbands who want to do their part to restore their marriages in the aftermath of unfaithfulness, but what is written here has implications for all of us—men and women, married and single alike. As followers of Jesus Christ we are all, I hope, seeking to grow in His likeness, to become more trustworthy to those around us and ultimately to His call.

PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST

A husband's sexual immorality is painful for everyone. First and foremost for the wife, but also for other family members and friends, and even for the husband. I believe in the majority of cases, perhaps particularly in the church, husbands ultimately do not want to continue to be bound by sexual sin and secrecy; they don't want to continue to hurt their wives and they don't want to destroy their marriages.

Following the revelation of unfaithfulness, a husband's first goal should *not* be to rebuild trust with his wife. Rather, his priority should be to become trustworthy. If he works on rebuilding trust without first becoming trustworthy, he is setting himself and his wife up to fall into the same kind of secrecy and sin that trapped him and devastated her. His focus needs first to be on his own recovery—dealing with his sexual addiction in whatever form it's taken. In this way, to a degree, he needs to take his eyes off of her and focus them on the

journey that's before him. This is not dissimilar to the instructions the airline attendants give parents flying with children: "Put on your own mask first and then you will be able to assist those around you."

Many couples may have a desire for things to "return to normal" and this is certainly a normal feeling. Considering the analogy above, no one wants to live in a house that's been hit by a bomb. But a couple who wants to see their marriage restored should not aim to have their house back together the way it was. It might be helpful to think of it this way: the house *itself* contained the elements that made up the bomb, and so to rebuild the house the way it was is to rebuild the bomb. Christ wants more than restoration to the way things were. He wants to restore the marriage to a brand new level of health and wholeness. Change is needed from the foundation up—for both the husband and the wife. *continued on page 2*

Please join us!

Benefit Desserts for Regeneration

Come celebrate Christ's Redeeming Love.

Baltimore:

April 16, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.

White Marsh, Maryland

RSVP no later than March 26, 2010

Please call 410-661-0284 for more information.

Northern Virginia:

Date and Location to Be Determined.

Please call 703-591-4673 for more information.

* An opportunity partner with Regeneration will be provided at both events.

GROWING IN TRUSTWORTHINESS

So how does a husband begin growing in trustworthiness? Thankfully, there is much he can do. First and foremost, he must come to the cross of Christ. There alone is the grace and truth he desperately needs. And he must learn, as Andy Comiskey has put it, to blaze a trail to the cross. Temptation will come again and again and again but our power to resist is at the cross. And beyond just resistance, our desires are also transformed at the cross.

Toward this end, a husband needs a structured and faithful accountability group. He needs allies—other men who will walk with him, listen to him, pray with him, battle with him. Godly Christian men within the local church are truly invaluable. It's ideal if this group consists of men who know the ins and outs of battling sexual addictions or unwanted homosexuality, if that is involved. (See p. 4 for information about Regeneration's *Rescue* and *SALT* programs.) Bob Ragan's June 2006 newsletter article, "Accountability: Not an Option," does a great job expounding on what is needed in the kind of group I'm describing. (Find Bob's article and other archived newsletters on the web at www.RegenerationMinistries.org.)

Next, it is my firm belief that a husband needs to tell his wife the whole truth about his sexual sin. He need not be graphic, but he does need to be complete. Husbands often hesitate here, thinking, "But if I tell her everything, she'll leave me." This response is focused on being trusted, not on being trustworthy. It is putting the cart before the horse. What's more, if you look deeper, it is apparent that this response is focused on the husband, not the wife. He is seeking to protect himself, not her.

In reality, withholding all or part of the truth from your wife is to agree that darkness and deception are better for your marriage and your wife than light and truth are. This doesn't mean telling the whole truth is easy or that it will be easy for your wife to hear. But the truth is not the enemy. Sin is the enemy—it's what brings destruction. The light just exposes the damage that's been done. No surgeon opts to dim the lights because it's just too painful to see so much devastation.

Having said this, it is possible that there may be seasons or *rare* exceptions when it is better for the husband not to disclose everything to his wife. Examples of this might be if the wife is going through a serious illness or other trauma, or if the husband's sharing is more centered on his own desire to purge his guilt than to help his wife. But typically, the husband is not objective enough to discern this on his own. He needs trusted,

objective, and whole-enough others who can help him discern rightly what to share and when, for *his wife's* sake.

In my experience, it is actually more common for a wife to stay with a husband who has been unfaithful but who demonstrates he is willing to be 100% truthful (trustworthy), than it is for a wife to stay with a husband who maintains an appearance of innocence but whom she finds repeatedly is not telling her the whole truth.

But whether his wife chooses to stay or go, a husband who resolves to do what he needs to do to become trustworthy sexually, who resolves to be truthful no matter what, and who *demonstrates* these to be true, this is a man who is ready to be trusted. Christ's example to us is giving up Himself for His Bride, not the other way around. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

REBUILDING TRUST

For a time after discovering a husband's immorality, it is like riding a speeding horse-drawn wagon and discovering the driver has jumped from the wagon leaving the reins flapping in the wind. Out of her own necessity, the wife must grab the reins of her marriage in a way she hasn't before. If he has lied and/or deceived her, she cannot rely on him to look out for her best interest. To do so would be unwise. Where she has been blind, she must now keep her eyes wide open and be vigilant to evidence that he is either working his recovery or continuing in his isolation and sin. She might have to begin paying the bills, holding the couple's passwords, or making decisions she didn't have to make before. She should not be his accountability partner nor the one who takes charge of his recovery (this doesn't work anyway), but she does need to look out for her own safety to protect herself and her children from his sexual sin. (For a very helpful past article addressing this topic more fully, read Alan and Willa Medinger's August 2001 article, "Can This Marriage Be Saved?")

After some time (exact time will vary depending on the severity of the problem and how trust was breeched), if the couple is walking a path of restoration individually and together, this dynamic should eventually shift. I find that too many husbands who are working their recoveries and doing a good job at it fail to rise up to lead in this area of their marriages. Instead they indefinitely leave it to their wives to hold the reins of rebuilding trust in the marriage. In essence, a husband may believe the best he can do to help her trust

Trustworthy and Trusted

continued from page 2

him again is to remain in the passenger seat and simply answer to her. In turn, their relationship becomes reminiscent of a son in relation to his mother. But ultimately, no wife wants to be a mother to her husband, and no husband feels respected by a wife who treats him as a little boy. A husband who is growing in trustworthiness must in time stand up in the good of his manhood in relation to his wife. He must begin to take the initiative in rebuilding trust.

How does this happen? Husbands, try to trump your wife’s efforts to regain solid ground under her own feet.

- When she has found it helpful to call you to find out when you’re coming home or where you are, be sure to call her first.
- If she’s taken over paying the bills so she can see where the money’s going, pay the bills for her leaving them in plain sight so she can still see where the money’s been going.
- If you know she worries about how you’ll do in the house by yourself when she’s out of town, make arrangements to stay with a supportive friend or family member, or reach out in advance to accountability partners for extra support. Then let her know.
- If you’re taking a business trip without her, give her the hotel information in advance, and call the hotel to make sure the adult channels are turned off in your room before you arrive.

These are just a few ideas of how you can help reduce some of her fears, and of course, they are all helpful for your recovery, too.

There’s one additional area where a husband can do a great deal of good in helping to rebuild trustworthiness in his marriage, and that’s in the area of communication—a husband should talk with his wife about how he is doing in his sexual purity walk. A trustworthy husband can do a great deal to rebuild trust by faithfully being the one to initiate those “check-in” times of letting his wife know how his recovery is going.

Through some trial and error, my wife and I decided together that we would have this conversation in our marriage at the end of each month. We left some wiggle room in case there were other things going on that would make this conversation inconvenient. I did four things that have been very helpful in establishing trust in this area for my wife:

1. First, as often as I could, I would talk with an accountability partner who knew all the ins and outs of

my month before talking with my wife. By doing this, I was making sure I was giving as accurate a picture as I could and I was ensuring I wouldn’t remember something later and have to add an “oh, and one more thing....”

2. I made it my goal to be the one to initiate these conversations with my wife. This was, of course, more difficult when I had a slip in the course of a month, but I believe even those months served to grow my wife’s confidence that I would always tell her the truth and would not lie—that she could trust me. And as I continued to grow in purity and the reports were more consistently positive, she could also trust that I was telling the truth.

3. I shared with her not only a matter-of-fact report of how I’d been doing, but also what positive steps I’d been taking, the recovery work I was engaged in, and who I was connecting with for help and support.

4. I would always invite my wife to ask questions and would encourage her to talk explicitly with one or more of her trusted friends as she needed to.

Holding the Reins

What I am describing here is not that a husband demanding the reins from his wife or taking them from her with force.

continued on page 4

Please Pray With Us . . .

PRAY FOR:

- God to use the Baltimore banquet to help men and women who are struggling with sexual issues to find support services and also for God to inspire those who attend to partner with us financially.
- A venue for our spring banquet in Northern Virginia. A location has not yet been determined.
- The successful start-up of S.A.L.T. in Northern Virginia on May 19, 2010.

WE THANK GOD FOR:

- The successful completion of the 2009-2010 session of Living Waters in Baltimore. Hearts were healed and changed by God.
- His wisdom and discretion regarding all facets of the ministry.

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

Trustworthy and Trusted

continued from page 3

But rather, as she holds the reins, he begins holding them with her. His grip should be relaxed but resolute, his eyes focused on the road ahead more than on his wife's hands. This is a husband who owns his own recovery—he is trustworthy—and he is determined to rebuild trust accordingly, for his wife's sake, for his marriage's sake, and lastly for his own sake.

Over time, if the wife is working her own part of the recovery, she will notice her husband's hands on the reins—steady, undemanding, capable, and helping—and she will begin to *want* to loosen her grip. Patience, gentleness, and perseverance are essential here for the husband.

A husband in recovery is first and foremost to be about the work of becoming trustworthy. As he grows in trustworthiness, he can do much to help rebuild trust with his wife. And every step of the way is worth it! A marriage between a husband who loves and is trustworthy for his wife, and a wife who respects and trusts her husband bears the image of God in a powerful and much-needed way on the earth. God is about the business of redeeming marriages to this end. May it be so in your marriage. ■

Seeking Office Manager:

Regeneration is looking for 20 - 30 hr/wk Office Manager for its Administrative Office in Parkville, Maryland. This person will manage a wide range of key tasks for both its branches. Qualifications: At least two years experience in comparable position; excellent organizational and communication skills; ability to work well both independently and as part of team; comfort with MS applications; knowledge of Raiser's Edge a plus. Applicants must be devout followers of Jesus Christ committed to a local church fellowship.

For more information contact Josh Glaser at 410-661-0284, ext. 1 or E-mail coversheet and resumé to josh@RegenerationMinistries.org.

MINISTRY NEWS

S.A.L.T.

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).

Rescue

(Men's Sexual Purity Group)

Rescue will meet in Baltimore, **Tuesday evenings, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. from April 6 to June 22, 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.

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)

Robert Passman
Men's Ministry Associate
(Baltimore)

Devon Medinger
Staff Accountant

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)

Matt Pladna
Database Specialist

Cheryl Durgin
Administrative Assistant

Alan Medinger
Founder